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THE MYSTERY CYCLE

(II) SOME TOWNELEY CYCLE PLAYS

(*concluded*)

VIII.

BETWEEN the Creation and the Judgment the central events of the Mystery Cycle—as of the Christian year—are the birth, death and resurrection of Christ; for these events the Old Testament episodes in the early part of the Cycle are in the nature of a prologue. In the sequences of the Nativity, Passion and Resurrection Christ has to contend with a succession of antagonists who are yet essentially one and the same. Thus the principal antagonist of the new-born god in the Nativity sequence is Herod. He is succeeded as principal antagonist by Pilate in the Passion sequence. Yet the Herod and the Pilate of the Mystery Cycle are both much of a piece, boasters and ranters, half villains and half clowns. In these respects we may note that they bear a resemblance not only to each other but also (for example) to the Turkish Knight of the Mummers' Play. This would not be surprising if all three represent a character type which has a common origin—an origin as one of the combatants in the ritual flyting between the old god (or king) and the new. The consistency of the character of the Towneley Pilate through the various plays of the Passion sequence has recently been demonstrated by an American scholar; Arnold Williams, in a detailed study. But whether or not this consistency was produced by the texts having been worked over by the 'Wakefield Master' or by any individual dramatist is less certain. Herod exhibits through different plays a similar consistency which cannot, in his case, be attributed to a single dramatist. If we ask why the Pilate of the Mystery Cycle should have developed, or been developed, into a character type different from the Pilate of the New Testament and very like the type to which the Herod of the Mystery Cycle and the Turkish Knight of the Mummers' Play also belong, the explanation may well be that a ritual dramatic antagonist of the Christ was needed who would fit the old traditional pattern. If the Herod and the Pilate are in this way a traditional ritual type, we meet once again in the new Christian drama a feature that belonged originally to the old pre-Christian ritual drama.

In the Towneley plays of the *Magi* (No. 14) and of *Herod the Great* (No. 16)—plays in which the Nativity sequence continues after the Shepherds' Plays—Herod is the old king who, as in so many folk tales, is afraid of the new-born child and tries to do away with him because of prophecies and rumours that the child

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will grow up to challenge and overthrow him as king. Though menacing and dangerous, the Herod of the Mystery Cycle is at the same time a kind of clown, a *sinister* clown. Perhaps it is because he is really feared, as a type of the powerful oppressor such as the Shepherds complain of in the Shepherds' Plays and who exists in fact in the world, that the imagination has here distorted him into a grotesque caricature; but if he was originally the impersonator of the old god he could never have been quite human and must always have been more or less grotesque. The Towneley Play in which the ranting Herod is most given his head in masterly dramatic verse is the play of *Herod the Great* (the only play of the Nativity sequence other than the Shepherds' Plays which has been found attributable to the 'Wakefield Master'). But though the Herod rant is more developed in this play than in the *Magi,* he is essentially the same Herod in both and a character type that had not needed to be specially invented for them.

The play of the *Magi* is not the equal of the Shepherds' Plays in variety and complexity as a dramatic poem, though it is good workmanship in stanzaic verse, a self-consistent and worthy rendering of its traditional subject. It appears to be more directly and simply in the line of descent from a Latin original in the Liturgical Drama. In the Towneley Play of the *Magi* the star[1] is described as brighter than sun and moon, and clearly signifies the newly risen and greater sun who is Christ. The play combines in a well-knit unity of opposites the Journey and Adoration of the Magi set over against the hostile rages and menaces of the Herod. The gifts of gold, incense and myrrh betoken the kingship, godhead and destined death of the infant whose birth has wonderfully happened.

The subject of the play of *Herod the Great* is the forbidding and indeed revolting one of the Massacre of the Innocents. Strangely enough, this theme of the persecution of the innocent (who may be a being about whom there is at least the suggestion of supernatural origin) runs through a number of the old traditional tales that in various versions continued to be popular throughout the Middle Ages—the tales, for example, of Patient Griselda, Constance and Emare. In this Towneley Play of Herod the abhorrent episode is presented in so stylized a manner as to suggest, at once, that the art here has not departed far from its ritual origin, and is here the more completely art for that very reason. Only as ritual rather than life could such an episode have been sufficiently made into dramatic art. Had the play been more naturalistic than it is, the balance between realism and ritual would have been upset and the play would surely have been merely revolting. An element of humour—a kind of ceremonial clowning as an aspect even of the slayings—is again strangely present.

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[1]In the performances of the Latin Nativity plays the *Stella* suspended in the church appears to have been, like the cradle itself, a central sacred object or symbol.

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The play begins with a ranting monologue spoken by Herod's Messenger and ends with a ranting monologue spoken by Herod himself. They evidently address the crowd at the performance directly (as still in some Elizabethan plays). In the opening monologue Herod's Messenger, who boasts and rants only less than his master himself will do, declares Herod to be sole king of all the kingdoms of the world and demands the undivided allegiance of everyone to him. Such violence of assertion, however, itself suggests that Herod's kingship has been seriously shaken by the birth.

> Thay carp of a kyng,
> Thay seasse not sich chateryng.

The Messenger's monologue heralds the entrance of Herod himself raging and, like the ogre of folk tales, threatening to break everyone's bones. Herod is angry more particularly because the Three Kings have not returned. His Three Soldiers or Knights (*milites*) announce that the Three Kings have gone home by another way; and this announcement starts off a flyting between Herod and his Knights as a consequence of which the latter temporarily retire. Herod then calls for his Counsellors or Clerks who consult their books and quote the prophecies about Christ, thus aggravating the storm of Herod's ragings.

> Fy, dotty-pols, with youre bookys!
> Go kast thaym in the brookys!

They appease him by suggesting to him the Massacre of the Innocents. Herod's Messenger instructs the Three Knights to execute this plan and to array themselves for the purpose in bright armour (as for some ceremony).

> In all the hast that ye may in armowre full bright,
> In youre best aray looke that ye be dight.

(The bright armour fits in well with the view that the originals of Herod's Three Knights were the attendants and supporters of the old sun god in his ritual contest with the young sun god). Each of the Three Knights is in turn opposed by a woman and her child; and each mother in turn calls for vengeance for the innocent whose blood is shed. This pattern is accordingly repeated three times; and is characteristic of the formal patterning of the play as a whole. The Three Knights boast to Herod of what they have done, and claim a reward. In the ranting monologue which rounds off the play Herod himself again boasts and triumphs and promises extravagant rewards to his Three Knights—next time ('when I com agayn').

Herod and Pilate are thus served in these plays by lesser Herods and Pilates who evoke (in Yeats's phrase) the 'emotion of multitude'. Though often rebellious and continually brawling, they do their master's bidding, cowed by his more powerful rant. Themselves oppressed they are themselves oppressors and—even when only three in number—*seem* to be a multitude. The recurrence of three figures

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also, Three Shepherds, Three Kings, Three Maries and (of the opposite party) Three Soldiers, Three Devils, is characteristic of the Mystery Cycle—as of mythology.

IX.

What happens in Christ's life in between the two great events, his birth and his death, is somewhat sketchily represented in the Mystery Cycle and is indeed mostly not there. As Raglan remarks (in *The Hero*) there is characteristically something of a gap between the birth of the hero (or god) and his *agon* and death; and this would not be surprising if the gap corresponds to the interval between two ritual ceremonies.

In the Towneley plays of the Passion the opening rant of Pilate in the *Conspiracy* (No. 20), the whole of the *Buffeting* (No. 21) and of the *Scourging* (No. 22) and the greater part of the play of the *Talents* (No. 24) have been atributed to the Wakefield Master and are indeed of such a texture as to justify the attribution. On the other hand, the *Crucifixion* (No. 23), which shows signs of various revisions, appears to belong on the whole to an earlier stratum.

In this great sequence of the Passion we are close to the origins of Tragedy in ritual drama—in the dethronement and sacrificial death of the king or god. The role of Christ here is that of the dying or sacrificed god preliminary to his resurrection and final victory over the demons of darkness. Pilate presides over Christ's death and is, as Herod is, something of a terrible clown who at his first entrance (in the *Conspiracy*) brandishes a sword, rages and rants. But he is a rather more multifold villain than Herod, a fearsome oppressor and at the same time, as he describes himself, a politic double-dealer (in both respects a prototype of some of the villains of the Elizabethan stage).

> For I am he that may make or mar a man;
> My self if I it say as men of cowrte now can;
> Supporte a man to day to-morn agans hym than,
> On both parties thus I play and fenys me to ordan
> The right.

Pilate's instruments—and in the play of the *Buffeting* the instruments of Cayphas and Anna—are the knights or soldiers, grumbling brawling ruffians, humorous savages like the devils of the *Last Judgment*. Christ speaks only once, and only a line or two, in the play of the *Buffeting* and similarly in the play of the *Scourging*. His silence is of course in the New Testament account morally most impressive. But in these episodes of the Mystery Cycle Christ has something of the mysterious impersonal or non-human quality of the sacrificial victim, something even of the passivity or immobility of a masked figure or of a sacred doll or puppet image of a god. Thus the *Buffeting* is, it seems, essentially a rite. Christ is placed on a stool blindfold and mockingly required to say who struck him last.

> We shall teche hym, I wote a new play of Yoyll.

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The resemblance to those rough mediæval games, Hot-cockles and Hoodman-blind, is surely not accidental. (In Hot-cockles the blindfolded man had to guess the name of his buffeter; in Hoodman-blind—from which our Blind Man's Buff is derived—the victim who wore his hood over his face had to try to catch one of his unseen buffeters.) We may remember also the farcical episode in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes in which Dionysos and his servant are beaten to establish which is the true god.

This sequence of episodes must seem to us painfully brutal and primitive. There *may* have been a grim recognition that the savagely humorous, mocking soldiers do not know whom they are maltreating. But this sense of irony may be a modern interpretation; the crowd at the Mystery Cycle are unlikely to have been so detached. The likelihood is that the soldiers know well enough—as well as do all the participants. The underlying dilemma was perhaps that the god had to be sacrificed and at the same time those who actively sacrificed him had to be condemned. Nevertheless, there seems at this point to be at least a partial identification of the worshippers with the soldiers rather than with the god. This savage clowning becomes more understandable once we recognize some connection between it and the ancient frenzied or orgiastic rites of mutilating or tearing to pieces the god[2] preparatory to his triumphant reappearance or resurrection in renewed power and glory like the sun scattering his enemies, the demons of darkness.

> For after this shall thou se when that I do com downe
> In brightnes on he in clowdys from abone.

The strange savagery—strange because humorous, and again buffoonery in the presence of death—that breaks out again in the Passion sequence of the Christian Mystery Cycle only becomes intelligible by means of some such explanation.

So Mary, too, by her lament at the foot of the Cross (in the Play of the *Crucifixion*) takes her place in the succession of the wailing women of the ancient rituals weeping for Adonis or for Baldur.

In the play of the *Talents* (the immediate sequel to the *Crucifixion* in the Towneley Cycle) Pilate and the Three Soldiers cast dice to decide who shall have Christ's coat. There is again New Testament authority for this episode in the mention of the drawing of lots for Christ's garments. But it is clear from what is said about the coat that in the play it is regarded as in itself a very special coat and is coveted for very special reasons, that it is supposed to possess magical properties. This is as we might expect if we remember that the kingship or godhead was regarded as itself inhering magically in the robe donned or doffed in ceremonial rites

[2]We need scarcely remind ourselves that in some primitive rites the sacrificed god—often an animal—was of course also devoured, not in order to destroy him but to possess him completely, that his life and power might enter into his people.

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by a king or human representative of a god.[3] It is his own title to the kingship that Pilate is concerned to establish or usurp immediately upon Christ's death, as is shown by his rant at the opening of the Play of the *Talents*. Of course, the game between Pilate and the Three Soldiers is quite irregular—a mere buffoonery of a solemn rite. Though Pilate walks off with the coat, he has not in fact won it. He proves himself once again a double-dealer and a bully, the arch-rogue, because although he loses in the dice throwing—he nevertheless insists on keeping the coat to himself. The scene is, at the same time, a realistic representation of a scene in a contemporary ale-house where dice were cast or games played for someone's hood as prize. As such it is excellent farce. At first Pilate, having thrown a high figure, thinks he is winning; but when unexpectedly he loses to the Third Soldier, he first asks the winner for the coat as a gift, and, when he is not given it, he impudently takes it. Then the Three Soldiers forswear dice and (surprisingly as coming from them) express vigorous moralist sentiments that seem to have flowered out from the mediæval vernacular sermons.

First Soldier.

Now thise dyse that ar undughty for los of this good,
Here I forswere hertely by Mahownes blood;
For was I never so happy by mayn nor by mode,
To wyn with sich sotelty to my lyfys fode,
As ye ken;
Thise dysars and thise hullars,
Thise cokkers and thise bollars,
And all purs-cuttars,
Bese well war of thise men.

Second Soldier.

Fy, fy, on thise dyse the devill I theym take!
Unwytty, unwyse with thaym that wold lake;
As fortune assyse men wyll she make;
Hir manners ar nyse she can downe and uptake;
And rych

---

[3]In Hocart's *Kingship* we read, for example: 'The garments with which the Indian king is invested . . . represents the various membranes of the womb into which the king is supposed to enter in order to be born again. They are termed the cauls and the womb of dominion or sovereignty. After putting on the womb the priest hands to the king five dice, saying, "Thou art the master; may these five regions of thine (*i.e.* the four points of the compass and the zenith) fall to thy lot". Sovereignty is thus acquired by decision of the dice, and this reminds us of the game played for supremacy between the Dalai Lama and the King of the Demons in Tibet, this leads us back to the idea of victory'. The Stripping of the Altar ceremony in Holy Week may correspond, perhaps, to the stripping of Christ.

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She turnes up-so-downe,
And under abone,
Most chefe of renowne
She castys in the dyche.
By hir meanes she makys dysers to sell,
As thay sytt and lakys thare corne and thare catell.

X.

We might well ask why the episode of the Harrowing of Hell (from the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus) should have assumed such significance for mediæval people that it forms one of the outstanding and apparently indispensable episodes in the Mystery Cycle. If a text of it was lacking locally it had at least to be borrowed, as the Towneley play (No. 25) appears to have been borrowed from the York Cycle. Surely the answer may have to do with the fact that in the mythologies the descent of the hero or god into the underworld is one of the regular, if not essential, episodes in his career. More specifically what we find enacted once again in the Play of the *Harrowing of Hell*, in a new form and with a new significance, is the age-old contest between light and darkness, the triumph of the sun-god over the demons of darkness. The association of Christ with the sun and with light is unmistakable even in the sequence of the Passion. Thus the soldiers remark of Christ's face that it is 'fare shynyng' and that, on the cross, 'it shoyn as any glas'; and Mary exclaims at the moment of his death:

Alas! thyn een as cristall clere that shoyn as son in sight,
That lufly were in lyere lost thay have thare light,
And wax all faed in fere all dym then ar thay dight!

The Play of the *Harrowing of Hell* enacts the victory that follows this temporary eclipse. The approach of Christ is experienced by the imprisoned souls as the approach of light dispelling the darkness in which they sit. It is one more proof of the accuracy of Hocart's observation: 'Thus the old beliefs which began before our earliest written records continue to supply Christianity with its imagery'. The identification of Christ as the true sun-god (*Sol Verus*) appears to have been deliberately made by St. Patrick and other early missionaries as a means of appealing to the pagans. Thus, having been given a new symbolic meaning, this important centre of the pagan mythology could be incorporated into Christianity. The episode of the Play appears to correspond to the ceremony of re-lighting the candles in the night before Easter, and, perhaps more fundamentally, to the first breaking of light on Easter morning. The plays of the Passion and the Resurrection correspond, in general, to the ceremonies of Holy Week.

Christ himself, in the opening monologue or prologue of the play, proclaims—'A light I will thay have'. There follows a dialogue between the souls in which their mounting excitement is felt, and it is on the theme of the dawning of light. Adam begins:

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Fower thowsand and sex hundreth yere
Have we bene here in darknes stad;
Now se I tokyns of solace sere,
A gloryous gleme to make us glad.

Eve responds:

This menys solace certain;
Sich light can on us leynd
In paradyse full playn.

Isaiah recognizes that his prophecy is about to be fulfilled:

I spake of folke in darknes walkand
I said a light shuld on theym lende.

John the Baptist joins his testimony to theirs:

His light is on us layde,
And commys oure karys to kele.

Moses describes the nature of the light as he experienced it on the occasion of the Transfiguration. ('Of that same light lernyng have I', as it is in the York Play, has been altered here in the Towneley Play to 'Now this same nyght lernyng had I').

As whyte as snaw was his body,
His face was like the son for bright,
No man on mold was so myghty
Grathly durst loke agans that light;
And that same light here se I now
Shynyng on us, certayn . . .

The triumph of light over darkness, and generally of life over death, which is the sublime theme of the *Harrowing of Hell* is thus seen to be the climax of the contest on the Cross in which Christ had only appeared to be the loser. The First Soldier in the Play of the *Crucifixion* had said, 'Ye just in tournament'. Christ is thus conceived, on the analogy of the romances, as the knightly champion whose opponent in the first joust in the Play of the *Harrowing of Hell* is Satan. He lays siege to his opponent's castle, symbolically breaks open the gates—they burst open at his command—and liberates the imprisoned souls within, releases imprisoned life, as victor over death.

Jesus. Attollite portas, principes . . .
Rybald. Out, harro, out! what devill is he
That callys hym kyng over us all?
Belzabub.
Go, spar the yates, yll mot thou the!
And set the waches on the wall . . .
David. Nay, with hym may ye not fyght,
For he is kyng and conqueroure,
And of so mekill myght
And styf in every stoure;
Of hym commys all this light
That shynys in this bowre . . .

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The play preludes the triumphant Easter morning theme of the Play of the Resurrection (No. 26).[4]

The Towneley Play of the *Harrowing of Hell* may be compared (as may also the Play of the *Fall of Lucifer*) with what appears to be its earlier and more complete form in the York Cycle. The elaborate, formal stanzaic verse of the York Play—alliterative and rhymed and reminding one somewhat of the stanzas of the *Pearl*—has not been very successfully kept up in the Towneley Play. The balanced, formal structure of the play, as it is in the York version, has correspondingly been disturbed by displacements and by some expansion and diffusion as well as simplification. Nevertheless the general arrangement and indeed much of the detail remains substantially the same in both versions. A prologue spoken by Jesus is followed by a dialogue between the souls who sit in darkness. This dialogue is formal, antiphonal, yet expresses an excited sense of light approaching, an expectancy of deliverance at hand. The devils or demons notice the commotion and it communicates itself to them; they themselves in turn become disturbed—there is an element of farce here.

Rybald. How, Belzabub! bynde thise boyes, sich harow was never hard in hell.

Belzabub.
Out, Rybald! thou rores; what is betyd? Can thou oght tell?

Rybald. Whi, herys thou not this ugly noyse?
Thise lurdans that in lymbo dwell . . . .

Belzabub.
They shall never pas out of this place.
Call up Astarot and Anaball
To gyb us counsell in this case;
Bell, Berith, and Bellyall . . . .

The devils are only less sturdy than those of the Play of the *Last Judgment* and certainly appear to have come from the same mythological source, the demons of darkness whom light quells. It is at this point in the play that the voice of Jesus is heard for the first time commanding:

Attollite portas, principes . . .

The Latin words are those heard during the services of Holy Week and used also in such ceremonies as that of the consecration of churches, at the opening of the barred door and the expulsion of the demons from the building (they must have accumulated solemnity through the centuries from such uses). The devils make ready to defend the castle of darkness; Belzabub calls up Satan himself, who appears grumbling and demanding what is the matter.

[4]The inspiration of Passus 18 of the B-text of *Piers Plowman* surely came from the witnessing of the Play of the *Harrowing of Hell*.

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Satan. The devill you all to har!
What ales the so to showte?
And me, if I com nar,
Thy trayn bot I bryst owte!

For the second time, in the play, the voice of Jesus is heard:

Attollite portas, principes . . .
Ye prynces of hell open yowre yate
And let my folk furth gone . . . .

The final stage of the contest is then entered upon, a dialogue exchange (or flyting) between Jesus and Satan at the end of which Satan sinks vanquished into the pit—a second fall of Lucifer.

XI.

The play of the *Harrowing of Hell* thus seems to correspond to the restoring of light in the night of vigil before Easter—in the Holy Week services—the re-lighting of the candles that had been put out and the first breaking of light on Easter morning. It is therefore immediately followed by the Easter play—the play of the *Resurrection* (No. 26). This Towneley Resurrection play appears to be based, like the *Harrowing of Hell*, on the York version. We may regard it as, in a sense, the oldest play in the Cycle, if we regard the Liturgical Resurrection play as having been the earliest of the Liturgical plays and these plays as the ancestors of all the plays that were gradually put together to form the Mystery Cycle. In the course of about two centuries, even after the change-over from Latin to English, the pattern of the Resurrection play appears to have been little altered. The soldiers on watch sleep, Christ rises, the Three Maries advance towards the vacant sepulchre, the Angel asks whom they seek, they answer, and so on, much as the New Testament episode had been performed by priestly actors in the church services. But though the pattern of the play itself has been little changed, it must have been that the triumph of the occasion was, in the Cycle, anticipated somewhat by the triumph of light theme in the preceding *Harrowing of Hell*. The pattern of the Cycle as a whole must necessarily have been altered by the introduction of the Harrowing of Hell episode; the stronger emphasis now falls on it rather than on the Resurrection; the Harrowing of Hell, as it were, steals the thunder from the Resurrection.

The further reappearances of Christ after his death are shown in a play called the *Peregrini* (No. 27) which represents the events on the road to Emmaus, and a play first entitled on the MS *Resurreccio Domini* and later altered to *Thomas Indie* (No. 28). These reappearances are typical of the slain hero or god in that (as is emphasized in the plays) it is not a mere ghost who appears but Christ himself who reappears in the body. No one in the plays denies the appearances. But the sceptics such as Thomas (Doubting Thomas) insist that it was a mere ghost who was reputed to have appeared.

Ye segh hym not bodily his gost it myght well be.

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Jesus himself then reappears to Thomas and convinces him—and no doubt the crowd at the play—that he is no ghost but actually himself alive again and in the body. He can be touched, and he sits down and eats with his Apostles once more as at the Last Supper; there could be no stronger proofs of his substantiality. The play of the *Ascension* (No. 29)—a patchwork of various metres that may indicate the work of various hands over a number of years—is far from a triumphant episode, because Christ, of whose bodily substance and actual restoration we have become convinced, is rapt away again through the clouds and his people on earth are left mourning his absence from sight and touch. In the next and final play of the Cycle, however, the play of the *Last Judgment* (No. 30) he comes again in power and majesty to judge the world.

XII.

The greater part of the Towneley play of the *Last Judgment* (No. 30) consists, as it now stands, of two dialogues between devils. It is not surprising that these two dialogues have been attributed to the Wakefield Master; they are not only dramatic poetry of a higher order than the rest of the play and indeed than most of the Towneley Cycle, but are similar in texture—allowing for the difference of their grim theme—with the two Shepherds' Plays. The devils (or demons) are again traditional types in the sense that they have almost certainly not been invented for the Mystery Cycle but have descended from some ancient or pre-Christian mythology; they appear to be of the nature more particularly of earth-demons who live underground and are antagonists of the light, the ancient demons of darkness. They are typical of the devils of other episodes of the Towneley and other versions of the Mystery Cycle, grimly humorous savages. The difference is simply that, as recreated in these two dialogues by a master poet, they are more alive and real than they commonly are. When this uncommon energy which they have here as dramatic characters is analysed it will be found once again to be identical with the uncommon satiric verve and raciness of the language in which they talk and flyte and in which a poet has re-created them. The colloquial language of the dialogue which this poet has composed is heightened into what is a remarkable feat of alliterative-and-rhyming verse; and the traditional satiric flyting mode has here achieved perhaps its most vigorous renewal in the whole Towneley Cycle.

At the beginning of the first of the dialogues two demons have heard the trumpet of the Judgment blown. They express amazed bewilderment; they are badly shaken and cannot at first make out what has happened. They, too, have suffered a resurrection. The chains that have bound them have been shattered by the blast. It may well have been that in the original mythology these chains were of ice—ice shackles—and the type of experience here expressed is of the sudden thaw in which the ice world breaks up, as happens with violence in the Scandinavian North (after all, the earlier home

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of such at least of the British people as were of Norse descent). At any rate, whether or not it was the hard, ice-bound earth in which the demons were originally fettered, the effect here is not only of their having been rudely wakened and shaken up but of their being benumbed and aware throughout their bodies of aches, pains and cramps. There are noticeable parallels between this episode and (as described in the Eddic vision-poem *Völuspa*) the Old Norse end of the world when the dreadful Gjalla-horn makes a roaring sound through all the worlds and the dwarfs are groaning. (It may not be fanciful to see in these traditional demons of the Mystery Cycle, at least as much as in the 'salvages' of the newly discovered lands, the ancestry of Caliban). The condition of the demons, as described by themselves, is principally a state of body, and the trumpet blast too has had a physical effect, as of an earthquake, upon their habitat, the region of darkness, in which they appear to have been hibernating.

Primus demon.

Oute, haro, out, out! harkyn to this horne . . .
I was bonde full fast
In yrens for to last,
Bot my bandys thai brast
And shoke all in sonder.

Secundus demon.

I shoterd and shoke I herd sich a rerd,
When I harde it qwoke for all that I lerd,
Bot to swere on a boke I durst not aperd;
I durst not loke for all medill-erd,
Full payll;
Bot gyrned and gnast,
My force did I frast,
Bot I wroght all wast,
It myght not avayll.

Primus demon.

It was like to a trumpe it had sich a sownde;
I fell on a lumpe for ferd that I swonde.

Secundus demon.

There I stode on my stumpe I stakerd that stownde,
There chachid I the crumpe yet held I my grounde
Halfe nome.

Primus demon.

Make redy oure gere,
We ar like to have were,
For now dar I swere
That domysday is comme.

It has slowly penetrated to them that it is Doomsday and that 'we are like to have war'.[5] Hell is by then vacant because the souls

[5]As described in *Völuspa*, too, there is a last universal war in which the gods perish.

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—whom they regard as their property—have already answered the dreadful summons. The demons recognize that their interests and their property are at stake. They must prepare to defend their legal rights and claims. It is necessary that, although they are afraid of the great Judge, they should themselves attend the Judgment—conceived as a great parliament—and make their way there up Watling Street; these demons have a local habitation. Like the dwarfs of folk tales, who carry bags on their backs, the demons of this play also have bags. These they declare to be stuffed full of sins and sinners—or of rolls which are the records of sins and sinners.

Here is a bag full, lokys,
Of pride and of lust,
Of wraggers and wrears a bag full of brefes,
Of carpars and cryars of mychers and thefes,
Of lurdans and lyars that no man lefys,
Of flytars, of flyars and renderars of reffys;
This can I,
Of alkyn astates
That go bi the gatys,
Of poore pride, that god hatys,
Twenty so many.

Here the first demon laughs till (as he says) he ties himself in a knot, and he offers his companion a drink. The demons with their rolls have now assumed the aspect of lawyers—or of clowns burlesquing lawyers—and the episode thus evolves into a parody of the Judgment. We do not know—we can only guess—what clowning additional to that explicitly suggested in the text there may have been in the performances. Their rolls were surely, judging from the multitudinous recordings referred to, too big and too many for them; we have probably here something of that type of clowning in which little fellows are overwhelmed by objects that are too large and too many for them and which they continually drop. But the demons are gleeful because they have accumulated such a superfluity of evidence in favour of their claims; it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and Doomsday is likely to increase their wealth. But had Doomsday been delayed much longer they would have had (the Second Demon says) to build Hell bigger; with the approach of Doomsday evil—as darkness in winter—has been multiplying in the world.[6]

As in the Shepherds' plays a Third Shepherd appears on the scene later than the other two, so here also a Third Demon (named Tutivillus) makes his appearance late. All three demons are, of course, late for the Judgment itself, and now and then express dread of the consequences. Tutivillus is recognized as his servant by the First Demon—again the figure of the mischievous servant—and is even more of a clown than the other two; he acts the clever and

[6]In *Völuspa*, too, there is brother against brother as the world nears its end.

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learned lawyer, quoting bits of Latin, and is complimented for his cleverness and learning by the other two. He boasts that he has on occasion fetched more than ten thousand souls in an hour to Hell, something of a conjuring feat.

> Mo than ten thowsand in an howre of a day;
> Som at ayll-howse I fande and som of ferray.

The resemblance between Tutivillus's 'ranting rhyming' and that of Burns and the other Scots satiric and comic verse-makers may not be accidental, since both belong to the province of Northern verse.

> Here a roll of ragman of the rownde tabill,
> Of breffes in my bag, man of synnes dampnabill;
> Unethes may I wag, man for wery in youre stabill
> Whils I set my stag, man.

Tutivillus's rant passes occasionally—like Herod's and Pilate's—into resounding Latin gibberish.

> Mi name is Tutivillus,
> My horne is blawen;
> Fragmina verborum Tutivillus colligit horum,
> Belzabub algorum Belial belium doliorum.

He, too, has a horn which surely parodies the terrible horn of the Judgment. Thus the whole solemn and terrible occasion is to some extent parodied.

Tutivillus proceeds to enumerate the wealth of sins and sinners who have been accumulated for the aggrandisement of Hell. He has collected records, in particular, of the proud and vain sinners who dress extravagantly while their children go without bread.

> Gay gere and witles his hode set on koket,
> As prowde as pennyles his slefe has no poket,
> Full redles;
> With thare hemmyd shoyn,
> All this must be done,
> Bot syre is out at hye noyn
> And his barnes bredeles.

It is as if the Celtic Other World—and its multitude of faery women—has been annexed to the Devil's kingdom, its nature changed and distorted. Among the multitude of women consigned to Hell are sinful hags whose ugliness is disguised by finery.

> So joly
> Ilka las in a lande
> Like a lady nerehande,
> So fresh and so plesande,
> Makys men to foly.
> If she be never so fowl a dowde with hir kelles and hir pynnes,

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The shrew hir self can shrowde both hir chekys and hir chynnes;
She can make it full prowde with japes and with gynnes,
Hir hede as hy as a clowde bot no shame of hir synnes
Thai fele;
When she is thus paynt,
She makys it so quaynte,
She lookys like a saynt,
And wars then the Deyle.
She is hornyd like a kowe . . . .
The cuker hyngys so side now furrid with a cat skyn.

Though 'hornyd like a kowe' describes head-dresses actually fashionable and 'furrid with a cat skyn' actual footwear, the phrases introduce also suggestions of animal characteristics and affinities, if not of animal disguises actually worn in festival ceremonies and dances. Satiric mockery of fantastic new fashions in dress keeps recurring.

Yit a poynte of the new gett to tell will I not blyn,
Of prankyd gownes and shulders up set mos and flokkys sewyd wyth in;

There is built up an impression of an immense diversity of sins and sinners—a diversity of perverted life that corresponds, perhaps, to the original diversity of created life.

Yit of thise kyrk-chaterars here ar a menee,
Of barganars and okerars and lufars of symonee,
Of runkers and rowners god castys thaym out, trulee.

But the proudest of all in this phantasmagoria of perverted life are the Seven Deadly Sins.

Thise laddys thai leven as lordys riall.

It may be that it was through the vernacular sermons that the Seven Deadly Sins passed into the poetry and drama of the Middle Ages. But we must ask exactly how these monstrous caricatures could have been created out of abstract moral classifications. The possible explanation is that they are—at least in part—moralized reincarnations of older mythical or ritual beings as these had persisted in the traditions and imagination and perhaps actual ceremonies[7] of the people. They appear to have lived on as a power in the vernacular itself; for, if we examine the passages in which they occur we see that it is a tendency in the vernacular itself that seems to create or re-create them. It is a tendency to magnify or distort certain elementary aspects of human nature and, occasionally, also to metamorphose the human form into the likeness of some animal or other. Tutivillus's descriptions of Drunkenness and Sloth are realistic enough; but, as a whole, the Deadly Sins here as elsewhere

[7]Dunbar's *Dance of the Seven Deidly Sins* and the scene in Alloway Kirk in Burns's *Tom o'Shanter* could almost be eye-witness descriptions of actual assemblies and dances of the witch cult.

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are caricatures of isolated aspects or elements of human life. They are certainly felt to be not less real than the ordinary human life they spectacularly illustrate; they are imbued with a terrible farcical intensity as if, indeed, they moved in some primitive ritual dance. The Seven Deadly Sins may, therefore, again be regarded as essentially traditional figures, not invented for this or for any other play of the Mystery Cycle but incorporated into it. Moreover they represent an important element—as in the comedy of Ben Jonson and of Dickens—of what became the English comic tradition. The description of the Deadly Sins in the final flyting monologue spoken by Tutivillus forms the grand climax of the first dialogue of demons.

His luddokkys thai lowke like walk-mylne cloggys,
His hede is like a stowke hurlyd as hoggys,
A woll blawen bowke thise fryggys as froggys,
This Jelian Jowke dryfys he no doggys
To felter;
Bot with youre yolow lokkys,
For all youre many mokkys,
Ye shall clym on hell crokkys
With a halpeny heltere.

And Nell with hir nyfyls of crisp and of sylke,
Tent well youre twyfyls youre nek abowte as mylke;
With youre bendys and youre bridyls of Sathan, the whilke
Sir Sathanas idyls you for tha ilke
This Gill knaue;
It is open behynde,
Before is it pynde,
Bewar of the West wynde
Youre smok lest it wafe.

Of Ire and of Enuy fynde I herto,
Of Covetyse and Glotony and many other mo;
Thai call and thai cry 'go we now, go!
I dy nere for dry' and ther syt thai so
All nyght;
With hawvell and jawvell,
Syngyng of lawvell,
Thise ar howndys of hell,
That is thare right.

In Slewthe then thai syn goddys warkys thai not wyrke;
To belke thai begyn and spew that is irke;
His hede must be holdyn ther in the myrke,
Then deffys hym with dyn the bellys of the kyrke,
When thai clatter;
He wishys the clerke hanged
For that he rang it,
Both thar hym not lang it,
What commys ther after.

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And ye Janettys of the stewys and lychoures on lofte,
Youre baill now brewys avowtrees full ofte,
Youre gam now grewys I shall you set softe,
Youre sorow enewes com to my crofte
All ye;
All harlottys and horres,
And bawdys that procures,
To bryng thaym to lures,
Welcom to my see!

Ye lurdans and lyars mychers and thefes,
Flytars and flyars that all men reprefes,
Spolars, extorcyonars welcom, my lefes!
Fals jurars and usurars to symony that clevys,
To tell;
Hasardars and dysars,
Fals dedys forgars,
Slanderars, bakbytars,
All unto hell.

Such multitudes of souls are now crowding into Hell that the Porter at the gate—like the Porter in *Macbeth*—is overworked.

Saules cam so thyk now late unto hell
As ever;
Oure porter at hell yate
Is haldyn so strate,
Up erly and downe late,
He rystys never.

Obviously the author of Act II, Sc. 3 of *Macbeth* knew of the Mystery Cycle and moreover expected his audience to take the reference to the 'porter at hell yate' in the sacred drama, with all its rich implications for the Shakespearean tragedy.

The second of the two dialogues between demons may be regarded as the sequel—in the same play of the *Last Judgment*—to the first; it is spoken between the demons as they are driving the flocks of the damned into Hell. Their attitude towards the damned souls is, of course, quite unsympathetic. The latter should have known better. Where are now their gold, their retinues and their finery? They were once sturdy and proud, finding fault with others. The viewpoint here is the opposite of the one expressed in the final monologue spoken by Doctor Faustus.

XIII.

Two additional pieces follow the play of the *Last Judgment* in the Towneley MS, a play of *Lazarus*, (No. 31) and of the *Hanging of Judas*, (No. 32). It may be assumed that they have been displaced from earlier in the Cycle. But one can well see how the episode of Lazarus might have gravitated towards the Last Judgment—the occasion of the general Resurrection of the Dead. In the play, Lazarus newly risen from the dead (To say 'I am Lazarus come

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from the dead') speaks a grim monologue—and, if it really did in some performance come at the end of the play of the Judgment, an epilogue on the theme of vanity and death.

Ilkon in sich aray with dede thai shall be dight,
And closid colde in clay wheder he be kyng or knyght
For all his garmentes gay that semely were in sight,
His flesh shall frete away with many a wofull wight.
Then wofully sich wightys
Shall gnawe thise gay knyghtys,
Thare lunges and thare lightys,
Thare harte shall frete in sonder;
Thise masters most of myghtys
Thus shall thai be broght under.

Under the erthe ye shall thus carefully then cowche;
The royfe of youre hall youre nakyd nose shall towche;
Nawther great ne small to you will knele ne crowche;
A shete shall be youre pall sich todys shall be youre nowche;
Todys shall you dere,
Feyndys will you fere,
Youre flesh that fare was here
Thus rufully shall rote;
In stede of fare colore
Sich bandys shall bynde youre throte.

Youre rud that was so red youre lyre the lylly lyke,
Then shall be wan as led and stynke as dog in dyke;
Wormes shall in you brede as bees dos in the byke,
And ees out of your hede thus-gate shall paddokys pyke;
To pike you ar preste
Many uncomly beest,
Thus thai shall make a feste
Of youre flesh and of youre blode.
For you then sorows leste
The moste has of youre goode.

Even here, macabre as it is, the poetry is, perhaps, to some extent lifted out of morbidity or mere horror by the caricature element. The references to the activities of toads, dogs, bees and frogs, and the incongruities and indignities—

Shall gnawe thise gay knyghtys . . .
The royfe of youre hall youre nakyd nose shall towche . . .

render the horrors of physical death not only vigorous and vivid but grimly farcical, almost.

XIV.

It may now be evident, from certain of the Towneley plays we have considered, that the Mystery Cycle is by no means a straight development or expansion from the Liturgical plays. There are

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things in the Cycle plays about which it is not surprising that the Church was more than doubtful; indeed, it is not surprising that the whole Cycle came to be regarded, from the Church's official point of view, as something which had got out of hand. Was it merely the tendency in unregenerate human nature to turn sacred things to buffoonery and farce which was responsible for the transformation? There is surely a profounder explanation. The Mystery Cycle was for the people, organized in their mediæval town-communities, deeply important and not merely an opportunity for irresponsible releases of rowdiness. The new Christian drama was adopted by the towns-people and kept up by them for the same kinds of reason that old pagan ceremonies and dances continued to be kept up, in some cases almost desperately, in defiance of the prohibitions of the Church—because they were still, though perhaps obscurely, felt to be sacred and fundamental to life. How long such a feeling, once sanctioned by religion, can persist after the religion has been lost is suggested by what Dr. Marett (as quoted by E. K. Chambers in *The English Folk-Play*) reports of an Oxfordshire participant in the now degraded and ludicrous Mummers' Play who, at a suggestion of his, protested; 'Oh, you wouldn't have women in that; *its more like being in church*'.

The classic Greek drama was evolved, we know, out of earlier dramatic rituals. The evolution of the English drama—the drama of Shakespeare—was perhaps in some respects more complex. It is necessary, in its case, to take account, for example, of the influence of Classical models at the time of the Renaissance. Nevertheless, the only truly national (and communal) English drama before the Shakespearean is the Mystery Cycle; and it is already the outcome of a union, a unique combination of the dramatic rituals of the old religion and the new, such as the priestly class could not by itself have accomplished even supposing it had wanted to do so. Thus we have noted that the Herod and the Pilate of the Mystery Cycle bear an unmistakable resemblance to the Turkish Knight of the Mummers' Play. But do we not also see them again on the Elizabethan stage itself as the prototypes of some of the villains and of the clowns or farcical characters? Do we not see them as an element occasionally even in certain of the Elizabethan 'tragic heroes'—in Lear or Macbeth in certain of the phases of their moral progressions? The Elizabethan dramatists did not need to borrow the stage type of the ranter or boaster from the Latin comedy or the Senecan tragedy—though, of course, the more scholarly of them were quick to find a Classical sanction for their own creations or re-creations. These types (they exist of course in life) were there already in the native English dramatic tradition as Herod and Pilate and generally as the antagonists in the flytings that are a regular feature of the pattern of the Cycle plays. The association of buffoonery with death, which is another characteristic feature of the plays of the Mystery Cycle, has again its counterpart later in that mixture of comedy and tragedy which is so characteristic of Elizabethan English drama and which so distressed neo-classic critics. Further-

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more, certain of the themes and symbolisms which are profoundly there in the Shakespearean drama—such as some of the symbolical significances of storms and disorders both social and natural, of winter and spring, youth and age, death and birth, the lost and the found one, disguises and metamorphoses, recognitions and restorations—are there already in the Mystery Cycle; as they are there, more universally, in the dramatic rituals with which the Mystery Cycle appears to have become associated and upon which it drew.

Thus, from his own point of view, Frazer in his *Folk-lore of the Old Testament* hints, perhaps, at what should be our approach to this drama when he says, 'Far-fetched as this idea may appear to us, it may seem natural enough to the folk and to their best interpreters the poets . . . . In investigating every branch of folk-lore, the student may learn much from the poets, who perceive by intuition what most of us have to learn by a laborious collection of facts. Indeed, without some touch of poetic fancy, it is hardly possible to enter into the heart of the people. A frigid rationalist will knock in vain . . . The porter will not open to Mr. Gradgrind'. The best of the Cycle plays yield their fuller meaning when they are recognized as poetic drama rooted in ritual drama. They have to be responded to fully as *poems*. The formula that drama is 'character in action' will only tend to inhibit this complete response, just as it does our response to Shakespeare. It will not be of use always to be looking in these plays for something in the character of any of the *dramatis personæ* to explain what happens. The *dramatis personæ* are often vivid enough as presences created out of the poetry of the dialogues and monologues; but what happens can never in these plays be explained simply in terms of characterization. Impersonal forces, forces outside personality, have as much or more to do with the shaping of events; and these impersonal elements and conditions are what the poetry makes us apprehend at least as much as it makes us apprehend persons.

The traditional art which shows itself successfully at intervals throughout the Mystery Cycle has had perhaps less acknowledgment as being an element in the Elizabethan drama than has (at any rate recently) Morality art. The latter appears now to be recognized as at least as important an element as the more famous Senecan influence, important though the latter was stylistically and in other ways. Yet, when taken together with the dramatic games, ceremonies and dances widespread among the people—and which Shakespeare may have had especial opportunities of being familiar with in his youth at Stratford—the traditional art of the Mystery Cycle may prove to be even more deeply implanted in the Elizabethan dramatic tradition, subtler in its shaping influence and certainly not less important. The drama of the Elizabethan London theatres was rooted in the traditional civilization of England as a whole, though in touch with the new Renaissance culture of the scholars and courtly poets; it was conscious of Classical and Italian models, but not subservient to them.

JOHN SPEIRS.

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SCOTT FITZGERALD: ANOTHER VIEW[1]

FROM all the evidence, Scott Fitzgerald is an important figure in American literature. Now, twelve years after his death, most of his work is in print: some of his books have been re-issued under the enthusiastic sponsorship of intelligent critics; several have been published in annotated editions; generous selections from the author's notebooks and the drafts of his novels and stories make possible a study of the origins of his fiction and the processes of its composition; a part of his correspondence has been printed and it is to be expected that more will be made available; an authoritative biography[2] was published last year; finally a volume of tributes, reviews, and critiques by distinguished contributors such as T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Edmund Wilson, John Dos Passos, and Lionel Trilling[3] should complete the evidence of Fitzgerald's stature. It is certainly impressive; it would be almost intimidating but for a small receding fact: Fitzgerald's work itself. On the basis of that, and apropos of Mr. D. W. Harding's recent article in *Scrutiny*, I should like to question modestly what the fuss is all about.

Certainly it is a roomy subject: the man, his time and (usually by inference) his work. Fitzgerald was a bright, engaging person with undoubted literary talent who lived a flamboyant semi-private life, made and spent a lot of money as a very young man, suffered a nervous 'crack-up' complicated (or partially caused) by acute alcoholism, and died prematurely while at work on what (it is claimed on questionable evidence) was to be a landmark in the American novel. His time was that period in America (spaced by ebullient raids on Europe) between the First World War and (roughly speaking) the first Roosevelt Administration, a time variously known as the Jazz Age, the Roaring Twenties, and the Boom Years, for which Fitzgerald supplied in some minds, a rallying point and a symbol, and to whose vocabulary he largely contributed.

The fascination of the man for investigators and commentators is increased and complicated by Fitzgerald's own apparent candour in his autobiographical writings—particularly his account of his

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[1]An article on Scott Fitzgerald by D. W. Harding appeared in the last number of *Scrutiny*.

[2]*The Far Side of Paradise: a Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. By Arthur Mizener, London; Eyre and Spottiswood, 18s.

[3]*F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and his Work*. Edited by Alfred Kazin, New York; The World Publishing Company, 1951. $3.00.

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collapse. For, says Alfred Kazin in the collection he edited, 'one feels in reading [*The Crack-Up*] that something is being persistently withheld, that the author is somehow offering us certain facts in exchange for the right to keep others to himself'. As a 'case', Fitzgerald is complete, even to his own testimony: he is on the couch for anyone who wants to have a go at him. As for the period and subject of Fitzgerald's literary activity, that bizarre recent interval is anybody's game: the 'twenties are part of the youth or manhood of almost anyone who wants to write about them; everyone has a stake in them, and so, presumably, nobody is yet to pretend to a final word on one's personal history. Fitzgerald's writings, too, in another but obvious sense, are the public domain: anyone who has taken an interest in them is invited to a critical opinion. There have been many opinions, but most of them (as I suggested above) have been oblique, or incidental to another kind of interest in the novelist, so that the enormous variety, and even contradictions, have never been forced head-on in any helpful elucidation. Fitzgerald has been, quite comfortably, all things to all critics.

Charles Weir, Jnr., writing in Mr. Kazin's collection about a number of articles published by the *New Republic* after Fitzgerald's death, said that they were 'less remarkable for the praise they accorded him than for their inability to make very clear just why the praise was merited'. I presume that Mr. Harding's interests in his article were other than critical, but in that case I wish he had implied why the *attention* was 'merited'. However, in a review of *Tender is the Night* in *Scrutiny* (reprinted by Mr. Kazin), Mr. Harding claims that 'the difficulty of making a convincing analysis of the painful quality of the novel, and the conviction that it was worth while trying to, are evidence of Scott Fitzgerald's skill and effectiveness'. Why are they? Given a complicated work of art, the difficulty of analysis may be granted, but the logic of Mr. Harding's 'evidence' suggests that the difficulty of refuting a man's guilt is evidence of his innocence. As for the basis of Mr. Harding's 'conviction', he goes on, in his next sentence, to suggest persuasively: 'personal peculiarities may of course make one reader react more intensely than another to a book of this kind'. Precisely, and many kinds of personal peculiarities (which might be illustrated from the essays Mr. Kazin has collected)—memories, curiosity, peculiar needs, prejudices and predilections, loyalty to the author, etc., and all operating in place of critical attention—have created Fitzgerald's reputation.

That may seem too easy, and besides, by such an account, it may be 'personal peculiarities' which handicap me for an appreciation of Fitzgerald. Rather, I want to suggest there is an emptiness in his work that makes 'convincing analysis' honestly difficult, but leaves a hollow space where critics can create their own substitute Fitzgerald. And I should probe for that hollow space in what we call the *centre* of a writer's work—that around which and with reference to which he organizes his experiences; in short, his values.

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Most critics have recognized that the test of Fitzgerald's values is in his response to money, or more exactly, the rich. This, to simplify for a moment, was one of awed admiration. Its history is familiar and convincing: an imaginative boy was transferred from the poverty of decayed gentility in provincial Milwaukee to a fashionable and expensive boarding school in the East, and then to Princeton. Impressed and enraptured, and adjusting himself with a schoolboy's agility to his new life, all its externals became immensely important to him—its clubs, hotels, cars, clothes, and so forth. They were the substance of a new society that he was struggling to enter at an impressionable age, and they never lost their allure for him. Lionel Trilling (puzzled like so many others by this attraction and trying to put a favourable construction on it) interprets Fitzgerald's feeling for the rich as the artist's need for 'the nearest thing to an aristocracy America could offer him'. That's an ingenious way of accommodating it, but I think there's as much of Mr. Trilling as of Fitzgerald in the remark. He certainly idealized the rich, but these ideal rich in his books, and the moneyed people with whom he associated in New York, on Long Island, in Paris, and on the Riviera were, quite crudely, the Big Spenders. Fitzgerald liked the flash of money, the distorted exaggeration it lent his gestures and impulses. 'It was fun spending money' is a statement of fact that recurs, and there's no reason to doubt that he meant it. But it wasn't as simple as that; there was something additionally hectic in his exhausting efforts to make money—'big' and 'quick' money by his writing—simply for the pleasure of throwing it away.

In Fitzgerald's writings money is inextricably bound up with the possibilities of life—and with its defeats, but with the latter only by the way. The defeat is not inherent in the fact of money, although where failure has occurred, money is helpless, true, and because it is helpless, it takes the blame. The outcomes of Fitzgerald's stories are rather baldly contrived, and just so it is contrived that money bears the disgrace of failure because money couldn't meet all the problems of human personality. But first, money as a positive, almost transcendent value: this is from *Tender is the Night*, and the description is of Dick Diver, the hero, and his wealthy wife: 'She had gathered that they were fashionable people . . . . Even in their absolute immobility, complete as that of the morning, she felt a purpose, a working over something, a direction, an act of creation different from any she had known . . . they seemed to have a very good time'. It goes on to describe the rhythm of the Divers' day as 'passing from the heat to the cool with the gourmandise of a tingling curry eaten with chilled white wine'. It is true that this is portentous—all is not well—but the quality of the experience and the quality of appreciation should be obvious in the solemn inflated language. (I don't know whether it is necessary to point out there is no irony here. The cruel Irony of Fate is invoked by Fitzgerald in his stories, but no critical irony works in the language. And in the passages just quoted that tongue isn't even in its cheek—it's hanging straight out.)

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There is a celebrated passage in *The Great Gatsby* describing the heroine's voice: 'It was full of money—that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbal's song of it . . . . High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl . . .'. In that opening phrase, if anywhere, one might expect a conclusive criticism, and it certainly lends itself to such an intention, but any such possibility surrenders abjectly before the crudely evoked glamour of what follows. And it is important that not only Gatsby, the adoring and *nouveau riche* farmboy, is enthralled at this point; the words are those of the supposedly detached narrator of the story. Apparently nobody—character or reader—is impervious to the 'inexhaustible charm' of money as represented by Daisy. In another place, 'Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor'. Disconcerting, that rather invidious 'hot struggles of the poor', but presumably Gatsby knew something of *them*; what he knew nothing about was the rich. Where was the 'mystery' in Daisy? There can have been no mystery in her (or in 'the freshness of many clothes') for her father, husband, or brothers; the mystery for Gatsby is in his ignorance, which overwhelms him. It overwhelmed Fitzgerald too—his own ignorance—which was why he couldn't write convincingly of the rich, only about his dazzled impressions of them, impressions that dominated his imagination, or until (one should add) it was dominated by something more immediate and personal, such as suffering or a grievance.

But Mr. Harding writes: 'A perfectly sure condemnation of much of the accepted behaviour of his set pervades *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*'. 'Perfectly sure'? and 'pervades'? First, I should like to quote from a letter Fitzgerald wrote a friend about *The Great Gatsby*: 'That's the whole burden of the novel—the loss of those illusions that give such colour to the world so that you don't care whether things are true or false as long as they partake of the magical glory'. And that, I believe, is very nearly 'the whole burden' of Fitzgerald—an uncompromising romanticism for which the value of life is in the 'illusion' and the falsifying *glamour*, and everything he cared for—women, the rich, extravagant parties, success—subserved that happy condition. As long as they functioned successfully they were safe from criticism, but should the illusion be threatened by the exigencies of life, 'sure condemnation' was meted out in the form of an easy but latterly perspicacity. People whose personal safety shelters in fantasy talk in a noble aggrieved tone about 'losing their illusions' as though they were the victims of some treachery other than their self-deception. Gatsby's stature as hero derives from his 'incorruptible dream'. Actually, it is only too corruptible, this naïve daydream of a likeable gangster, and would have collapsed miserably had not Fitzgerald and Fate mercifully murdered him before the inevitable disaster. Daisy ('the king's daughter, the golden girl'), who served adequa-

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tely as the substance of that dream throughout the novel is thus condemned at the end of the book: 'They were careless, [her husband] and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clear up the mess they had made'; a telling insight if only it had 'pervaded' the book instead of serving as an anti-climax to Gatsby's death. The condemnation of the 'set' in *Tender is the Night* must focus, if at all, on Nicole, Dick Diver's wife. A central character, and, with her great beauty and greater wealth, a flowering epitome of the rich, she must for dramatic logic incorporate their weakness as well as their strength. True, she off-handedly abandons her husband at the end of the book, but by that time he has 'cracked up' and turned against *her*. In any case, she is invalidated as a dramatically effective character or symbol of anything because she is introduced as a neurotic and continues convalescent through the book. And finally (as in the case of Daisy) it is too late to turn on her at the end of the book after she has been used for some 300 pages as the embodiment of the Fitzgerald glamour.

Certainly Fitzgerald had some insight into the corrupting influence of wealth; he is capable, on occasion, of penetrating and devastating observation. But I can't see that any critical attitude to the rich was a consistent impulse in his writing about them, and the support to his pretensions as a moralist given by Mr. Trilling and others (and endorsed, by implication at least, by Mr. Harding) seems to me only another device to inflate the Fitzgerald stock. At best, his attitude to the rich was ambivalent, which is to say it was emotional: he accepted the life of wealth for the immunities it granted and for whatever protection it afforded to the illusions it creates; then he indulged, at its expense, his *taste* for moralizing whenever its protection proved inadequate.

But if the negation of values (or the substitution for them of illusion) created a hollow space in *The Great Gatsby* and made Gatsby unreal and his fate unimportant, Fitzgerald still achieved there a real, if limited, success. I believe it was as far as he could go, and he could go so far because he made fantasy—illusion—the preposterous *subject* of his book, and for the happily short space of the novel created the illusion against the background of a nightmare country he calls New York and Long Island.

Tender is the Night, on the other hand, is (to my mind) a failure. It has been called (by Mr. Harding and others) his most ambitious work, and it certainly is—in the unhappy sense of the term: Fitzgerald was attempting something beyond his powers. It is the account of the disintegration of an apparently admirable and gifted doctor, and the intention (as far as one can guess from the performance) was one of large-scale tragic proportions. Fitzgerald's gift was for the catchy phrase, the mannerisms of a superficial set of people in a particular time and place, and a quasi-poetical evocation of atmosphere: these are scarcely the material for a psychological tragedy. He had but a limited understanding of character,

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and the very sad thing about this book is that he apparently thought that if he understood the human complexity of any situation, he understood this one. His wife (like Dick Diver's) was in the harrowing throes of a mental collapse; he (like his hero) was 'cracking up'. But that was the trap (the question of adequate talent apart): he was so close to the situation and it was so important to him that he felt he need only state the facts themselves (like ciphers) to imply the experience and compel the emotional assent of his readers. Fitzgerald always depended on his readers feeling about things as he did, and that enough of them did partially accounts for his original success, but in the peculiar case he treats in this novel he relies on sympathy alone, without the possibility of imaginative identification. There was a certain *bluff* in his attempt, which is all very well when successful: in this novel its transparency only adds to the embarrassment. The simplest way to indicate the bluff is in the language, by a few quotations. First, he attempts to forward the action by mere statement, in bald summaries: 'He had lost himself—he could not tell the hour when, or the day or the week, or the month or the year'. Again: 'The most unhappy aspect of their relations was Dick's growing indifference, at present expressed by too much drinking'—the fatigue and the fallacy of 'at present expressed by!' In the flat statement, too, he lays claim to large social implications: 'The trio of women at the table were representative of the enormous flux of American life'. And in the same vein, the knowing and meaningless (?) observation: 'Certain classes of English people lived upon a concentrated essence of the anti-social . . .'. (That vague and pretentious 'essence' is a favourite word in the novel.) Then there is the psychological generalization: 'Women are necessarily capable of almost anything in their struggle for survival'. Crude simplification passes for 'intelligence'; there can be no need to indicate the inertia of 'almost anything' or the cliché 'struggle for survival'. Fitzgerald is obviously at a distance from his subject, whether separated from it by his ignorance, or indifference, or a second-hand acquaintance with it, and he tries to force the distance by the devices instanced, or by means of a pretentious jargon; *e.g.*: 'She would be able to hold him so long as the person in her transcended the universals of her body'. And of course he essays the old bright phrase: 'her brown back hanging from her pearls', and 'their eyes met and brushed like birds' wings', or 'perverted as a breakfast of oatmeal and hashish'. Is there any need to drag on the painful catalogue to suggest the uncertainties of this book?

Fitzgerald is said to have a documentary interest. That is frequently true, and in the most valuable sense. He not only provides the facts (those that interested him), he was so wholeheartedly dedicated to the life in which he was immersed that he provides also the emotional connotation of these facts. He had an acute sense of a time—of a particular year, a 'season'. It is as precise and as isolated as a season in an adolescent's scrapbook, and significant (for Fitzgerald) in the same way: it was the season of a particularly

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uproarious party, or the year after so-and-so was thrown out of college. It is defined by the style of the cars, the length of the skirts, the historic consequences of a football match. And by songs—('a neat sad little waltz of that year')—or by their names and words: his books are littered with these dead songs, evocative, perhaps, for those who remember the tunes, but for most readers just sad little rubbish among the college boy's souvenirs. But 'dated' as they are, these odds and ends attest the more eloquently, by a trick of retrospection, to the undercurrent of Fitzgerald's writing. His sense of time is a sense of its quick passage and its losses, and if a moment in time exists by its fads and fashions, then quick indeed is its flight, and really dead the life that knew itself by its hair styles, waltz tunes, and football scores. 'This year's debutante is next year's mother'—such might serve as the melancholy moral. And so, with the nostalgia that wells up out of Fitzgerald's writing one is at last impatient. There is a limited interest in the humourless self-absorption of a romantic boy anticipating the loss of youth, and even embarrassment when that boy (now in his mid-thirties) writes years after the event (of his early success): 'I remember riding in a taxi one afternoon between very tall buildings under a mauve and rosy sky; I began to bawl because I had everything I wanted and knew I would never be so happy again'. Nor was he—that is the point whose pathos is solemnly offered us in that vignette of wistful near-innocence 'between very tall buildings under a mauve and rosy sky'.

JOHN FARRELLY.

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THE NOVEL AS DRAMATIC POEM (VII):

'THE RAINBOW' (II)

THIS difference from George Eliot that strikes us simultaneously with the clear kinship comes out with great force in the courting of Lydia. When, 'twenty-eight, a thick-limbed, stiff, fair man with fresh complexion and blue eyes staring very straight ahead', leading his horse, with the load clanking behind, down the steep hill homeward, Brangwen meets and passes in the road the strange foreign woman, and says involuntarily, 'That's her', we have a very specific sense, even so early in the book, of the forces registered in the exclamation—the complexity speaking. Of what complex structure of needs love engages, and what marriage must involve for Brangwen, we know a good deal; and we know that what we have here is no drama of romantic love-at-first-sight. It might be said that the needs, as Lawrence presents Brangwen, are, *mutatis mutandis*, in a general way Maggie Tulliver's. But under that 'general' lies the immense difference between the two authors: it can be brought down here to the constatation that Lawrence sees what the needs are, and understands their nature, so much better than George Eliot. In the comparison, in fact, we have to judge that George Eliot doesn't understand them at all. Her strength doesn't lie here. When she most deliberately attempts this theme she produces her Dorotheas and her Daniel Derondas.

The point I want to make in stressing this obvious enough difference is that the given strength of Lawrence's is not something separable from that strength which (I suggested) would have struck George Eliot as the poetic intensity of his art. This intensity is an extraordinary sensuous immediacy (it is no more merely sensuous than the charged intensity of Shakespearean poetry is). We can take in illustration the peculiarly, and characteristically, moving power (more to the point, it is *specifically* moving) with which we are given Brangwen's courting visit to the vicarage. The world here is, in one sense, very much George Eliot's and we may be sure that she would have admired the rendering—admired, in recognizing the immense unlikeness to anything she could herself have done. And the unlikeness, examined, comes down to the difference between the writer of whom (as I recalled) it has been said that the word for her is 'ethical' rather than 'religious' and the writer of whom that could not have been said.

> 'One evening in March, when the wind was roaring outside, came the moment to ask her. He had sat with his hands before him, leaning to the fire. And, as he watched the fire, he knew

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almost without thinking that he was going this evening.

'"Have you got a clean shirt?" he asked Tilly.

'"You know you've got clean shirts", she said.

'"Ay—bring me a white one".

'Tilly brought down one of the linen shirts he had inherited from his father, putting it before him to air at the fire. She loved him with a dumb, aching love, as he sat leaning with his arms on his knees, still and absorbed, unaware of her. Lately, a quivering inclination to cry had come over her, when she did anything for him in his presence. Now her hands trembled as she spread the shirt. He was never shouting and teasing now. The deep stillness there was in the house made her tremble.

'He went to wash himself. Queer little breaks of consciousness seemed to rise and burst like bubbles out of the depths of his stillness.

'"It's got to be done", he said as he stooped to take the shirt out of the fender, "it's got to be done, so why balk it?" And as he combed his hair before the mirror on the wall, he retorted to himself, superficially: "The woman's not speechless dumb. She's not clutterin' at the nipple. She's got the right to please herself, and displease whosoever she likes".

'This streak of commonsense carried him a little further.

'"Did you want anythink?" asked Tilly, suddenly appearing, having heard him speak. She stood watching him comb his fair beard. His eyes were calm and uninterrupted.

'"Ay", he said, "where have you put the scissors".

'She brought them to him and stood watching as, chin forward, he trimmed his beard.

'"Don't go an' crop yourself as if you was at a shearin' contest", she said anxiously. He blew the fine-curled hair quickly off his lips.

'He put on the clean clothes, folded his stock carefully, and donned his best coat. Then, being ready, as grey twilight was falling, he went across to the orchard to gather the daffodils. The wind was roaring in the apple-trees, the yellow flowers swayed violently up and down, he heard even the fine whisper of their spears as he stooped to break the flattened, brittle stems of the flowers.

'"What's to-do?" shouted a friend who met him as he left the garden gate.

'"Bit of courtin' like", said Brangwen.

'And Tilly, in a great state of trepidation and excitement, let the wind whisk her over the field to the big gate, whence she could watch him go.

'He went up the hill and on towards the vicarage, the wind roaring through the hedges, whilst he tried to shelter his bunch of daffodils by his side. He did not think of anything, only knew that the wind was blowing.

'Night was falling, the bare trees drummed and whistled. The vicar, he knew, would be in his study, the Polish woman in

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the kitchen, a comfortable room, with her child. In the darkest of the twilight, he went through the gate, and down the path where a few daffodils stooped in the wind, and shattered crocuses made a pale, colourless ravel.

'There was a light streaming on to the bushes at the back from the kitchen window. He began to hesitate. How could he do this? Looking through the window, he saw her seated in the rocking-chair with the child, already in its nightdress, sitting on her knee. The fair head with its wild, fierce hair was drooping towards the fire-warmth, which reflected on the bright cheeks and clear skin of the child, who seemed to be musing, almost like a grown-up person. The mother's face was dark and still, and he saw, with a pang, that she was away back in the life that had been. The child's hair gleamed like spun glass, her face was illuminated till it seemed like wax lit up from the inside. The wind boomed strongly. Mother and child sat motionless, silent, the child staring with vacant dark eyes into the fire, the mother looking into space. The little girl was almost asleep. It was her will which kept her eyes so wide.

'Suddenly she looked round, troubled, as the wind shook the house, and Brangwen saw the small lips move. The mother began to rock, he heard the slight crunch of the rockers of the chair. Then he heard the low, monotonous murmur of a song in a foreign language. Then a great burst of wind, the mother seemed to have drifted away, the child's eyes were black and dilated. Brangwen looked up at the clouds which packed in great, alarming haste across the dark sky'.

This, of course, is to be taken as a reminder of the whole episode of the proposal. But in the passage as it stands the qualities in question are perhaps sufficiently present to make the point I am intent on. It is that the marvellous reality of the evocation cannot be distinguished from an intense specificity of dramatic significance: what is evoked is a given spiritual crisis, a crucial moment in a particular human life. The background of day-to-dayness against which the extreme and critical unordinarinesss of Brangwen's state stands out as given in the presence of Tilly—and in the 'Bit of courtin', like'. There is nothing routine or rustically usual about this courting. Brangwen can speak and act in scenes that, on the face of it, belong to the world of Mrs. Poyser's kitchen, but he is the full complex human psyche, with all its potentialities.

'And as he watched the fire he knew almost without thinking that he was going this evening'—it is the difficulty achieved wholeness of resolution in him that acts. And this state is what expresses itself in the poetic intensity of the episode, as we are given it. 'He did not think of anything, only knew that the wind was blowing'. What we have here, of course, is not relaxedness or distraction; he perceives 'out of the depths of his stillness', where the whole resolution is gathered—the stillness being set off by the outer stresses and disturbances. The needs and profound purposes that it unites

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are there in the intensity of the perceptions in which they register themselves, undistracted by his 'thinking of anything'; the intensity, on examination, we recognize to be a matter of their charge of significance.

He 'knows' that 'the Polish woman' will be in the kitchen with the child; and there, through the window, looking, with the glass between, from the darkness outside into the lighted interior, he sees them, and stands to watch. The foreignness is an important element. It emphasizes the theme of 'otherness', which has an aspect I have not yet touched on . Their mutual otherness is not just something that the man and woman in love and marriage must, with resignation, accept. True, the difficulty of the acceptance has its notation : 'he saw, with a pang, that she was away back in the life that had been'. But, before being told, we know that he is 'glad she is a foreigner'; the strangeness is for him a condition of depth and wholeness in the response. We have her a theme that recurs in *The Rainbow* as the experience of new love recurs in each new generation. Either lover is for the other a 'door'; an opening into the 'unknown', by which the horizon, the space of life, is immensely expanded, and unaccepted limits that had seemed final are 'transgressed'. Of Anna and Will, for example, we read:

> 'Without knowing it, Anna was wanting him to come. In him she had escaped. In him the bounds of her experience were transgressed; he was the hole in the wall, beyond which the sunshine blazed on an outside world.
>
> 'He came sometimes, not often, but sometimes, talking again, there recurred the strange remote reality which carried all before it'.

The sense of the door into the unknown and of the opening of horizons may turn out to be mainly illusion, as in Ursula's experience of Skrebensky:

> 'He brought her a strong sense of the outer world. It was as if she were set on a hill and could feel vaguely the whole world lying spread before her'.

The 'outer' is merely outer; Ursula finds in Skrebensky no unknown that can be for her a real transcending of the banal. The relation between them manifests itself in due course as wholly a failure. And the failure is there in the beginning:

> 'And he kissed her, asserting his will over her, and she kissed him back, asserting her deliberate enjoyment of him. Daring and reckless and dangerous they knew it was, their game, each playing with fire, not with love. A sort of defiance of all the world possessed her in it—she would kiss him just because she wanted to. And a dare-devilry in him, like a cynicism, a cut at everything he pretended to serve, retaliated in him'.

. . . . . .

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'So shaken, afraid, they went back to her parents in the kitchen, and dissimulated. But something was roused in both of them which they could not now allay. It intensified and heightened their senses, they were more vivid, and powerful in their being. But under it all was a poignant sense of transience. It was a magnificent self-assertion on the part of both of them . . . . And after all, what could either of them get from such a passion but a sense of his or her own maximum self, in contradistinction to all the rest of life? Wherein was something finite and sad, for the human soul at its maximum wants a sense of the infinite.

'Nevertheless, it was begun now, this passion, and must go on, the passion of Ursula to know her own maximum self, limited and so defined against him'.

I cite these later pages of *The Rainbow* here (the passages quoted are not in themselves extraordinary, the 'love' between Ursula and Skrebensky being a very ordinary kind of thing) in order to bring out by contrast the effect of the passage we are examining, that giving us Tom Brangwen's visit to the vicarage. What is defined in that passage is so much more than sensual passion (though that has its part), and it is something that entails the opposite of any assertion of will or of self. In the 'depths of his stillness' Brangwen contains, and lives, a resolution of the whole being; a state that sees its meaning out there in the lighted interior; in the scene that is separated by the glass from the windy night and contained in a stillness for contemplation. The Polish woman is not merely a lady and a foreigner, an object of awe and wondering conjecture; she is a mother with a child upon her knee. The symbol is a familiar one, but there is nothing banal or sentimental about its use here, nothing of the cliché about its relation to tradition:

'The fair head with its wild, fierce hair was drooping towards the fire-warmth, which reflected on the bright cheeks and clear skin of the child, who seemed to be musing, almost like a grown-up person. The mother's face was dark and still, and he saw, with a pang, that she was far away in the life that had been. The child's hair gleamed like spun glass, her face was illuminated till it seemed like wax lit up from the inside. The wind boomed strongly. Mother and child sat motionless, silent, the child staring with vacant dark eyes into the fire, the mother looking into space. The little girl was almost asleep. It was her will which kept her eyes so wide'.

The tenderness, reverence and wonder that are defined here have an utterly unsentimental strength. And this is not the less so because of the directness of the presence of Brangwen's own past, as we know it. We recall the cultural role of 'the woman' at the Marsh Farm. With the mother are associated, for Brangwen, not only the pieties, the sanctions and the ethical standards, but also the aspiration to 'learn the entry into the finer, more vivid circle of life'. This aspiration of the mother for her children, we noted, is a wholly

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different thing from snobbery. What she values in the superiority of outward fineness is the promise of a 'higher form of being', and that this is no mere phrase, Lawrence's art leaves it impossible for us to question:

> 'Looking out, as she must, from the front of her house towards the activity of man in the world at large, whilst her husband looked out to the back at sky and harvest and beast and land, she strained to see what man had done in fighting outwards to knowledge. She strained to hear how he uttered himself in his conquest, her deepest desire hung on the battle that she heard, far off, being waged on the edge of the unknown. She also wanted to know, and to be of the fighting host'.

This 'deepest desire' of the mother is there in Brangwen's being drawn to a foreigner and a lady. We note in the passage just quoted the part played by the 'unknown' and the 'beyond': words that figure so significantly in Lawrence's rendering of the relations between men and women. Life is 'fulfilled' in the individual or nowhere; but without a true marital relation, which is creative in more than the sense of producing children, there can be no 'fulfilment': that is the burden of Lawrence's art. It is in the establishment of a sure relation with the 'beyond' that the creativeness of a valid marriage has its inclusive manifestation. What the word 'beyond', with the associated symbol, the rainbow, points to is what all the varied resources of Lawrence's dramatic poem are devoted to defining. The particular concrete terms of the state of 'fulfilment' vary from individual to individual. The means by which the force of this word, and of the related words, together with the value of the rainbow symbol, is established are, in their immensely greater range and freedom of life, of the order of those discussed by D. W. Harding, in his examination[1] of *Burnt Norton*, under the head of the 'creation of concepts'.

To have achieved 'fulfilment' is to find meaning in life in the sense of having found immunity against the torment of the question, 'What for?', and found it, not by falling into inert day-to-dayness, the anaesthesia of habit or automatism, but by achieving what Lawrence elsewhere (and both the context of discourse in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and the art of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* make it very much more than a phrase) calls 'spontaneous-creative fulness of being'. General descriptive terms might seem to suggest the day-dreams of Maggie Tulliver and the consummation represented by Daniel Deronda (justified in his 'sweet irresistible hopefulness that the best of human possibilities might befall him—the blending of a complete personal love in one current with a larger duty'—this duty representing the 'higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities'). But what Lawrence's art defines

[1] *Scrutiny*, Vol. V, No. 2, p. 174.

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is something very different from an idealizing 'personal love' associated with ethical exaltation—emotion-and-devotion, passionate and high-principled. The complex and delicate relations that form a marriage involve, in themselves, the recognition of something beyond love—the recognition that love is 'not an end in itself':

> 'Dorothy pondered, rather angry and afraid.
>
> ' "Then what *do* you care about?" she asked, exasperated.
>
> ' "I don't know", said Ursula. "But something impersonal. Love—love—love—what does it mean—what does it amount to? So much personal gratification. It doesn't lead anywhere".
>
> ' "It isn't supposed to lead anywhere, is it? said Dorothy, satirically. "I thought it was the one thing which is an end in itself".
>
> ' "Then what does it matter to me?" cried Ursula. "As an end in itself, I could love a hundred men, one after the other. Why should I end with a Skrebensky?".'

That is after Ursula's failure with Skrebensky. They *have*, these two, in their affair, treated love as an end in itself; an end to which Skrebensky, by way of answering the question, 'What for?' proposed to add another 'end in itself', ethical devotion, figuring as the good of humanity. The case presented in Brangwen as he stands outside the kitchen window at the vicarage is of another order. What I have called the wholeness of his resolution is focussed on the scene he contemplates through the window; the distinguishable positives other than love that are associated with the 'something impersonal' that love, for him, involves—pieties, sanctions, ethical values, and the Brangwen mother's divinations (as they have affected him) of a 'higher form of being'—are there, so to speak, in what he sees. They are there in the impersonality that is dramatically realized as his 'stillness'—the 'stillness' out of the 'depths' of which his perceiving comes.

I have spoken of the tumult of the outer world as serving to set off the inner stillness (and the stillness behind the glass). But its action is more than that:

> 'Suddenly she looked round, troubled, as the wind shook the house, and Brangwen saw the small lips move. The mother began to rock, he heard the slight crunch of the rockers of the chair. Then he heard the low, monotonous murmur of a song in a foreign language. Then a great burst of wind, the mother seemed to have drifted away, the child's eyes were black and dilated. Brangwen looked up at the clouds which packed in great, alarming haste across the dark sky.
>
> 'Then there came the child's high, complaining, yet imperative voice:
>
> ' "Don't sing that stuff, mother; I don't want to hear it". 'The singing died away'.

Here, plainly, the effect is that of a passage I quoted earlier:

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'But during the long February nights with the ewes in labour, looking out from the shelter into the flashing stars, he knew that he did not belong to himself . . .'.

The effect is to reinforce directly, giving an added depth to its suggestion, a presence, already strongly evoked, of what is registered later as absent in Ursula's relations with Skrebensky:

'She knew him all round, not on any side did he lead into the unknown. Poignant, almost passionate appreciation she felt for him but none of the rich fear, the connexion with the unknown, or the reverence of love'.

No more, perhaps, need be said to justify the observation that Lawrence's treatment of the relations between men and women—his central interest—illustrates something in his art to indicate the distinctive nature of which we have to use the word 'religious'. I have made the point that this characteristic is not something separable from the poetic intensity that distinguishes him from George Eliot. When we examine this intensity, as in the episode of Brangwen's courtship, what we find ourselves analysing is an effect as of a religious vibration. In fact, we are led by the analysis of such passages to the recognition that the poetic intensity that characterizes Lawrence's art in general, and leads to the mistaken view that his genius is essentially 'lyrical', derives from a depth and wholeness of response in him of the kind that he illustrates, with a specific dramatic propriety, in Brangwen. In Lawrence's wholeness, of course, there is the marvellous intelligence of the great artist: his capacity for an impersonal depth of response has an immensely wide and varied application. But the vividness in his rendering of all the varieties of life, human and non-human, *is* this depth—depth that involves an impersonal wholeness.

Love between man and woman in the three generations of *The Rainbow* is most successful in the first. Between Tom and Lydia there are, of course, the inevitable difficulties: 'Such intimacy of embrace, and such utter foreignness of contact'. He learns painfully —a recurrent theme in Lawrence—that though the relation springs from mutual need, there is a dependence that cannot be permitted:

'When, in November, the leaves came beating against the window shutters, with a lashing sound, he started, and his eyes flickered with flame. The dog looked up at him, he sunk his head to the fire. But his wife was startled. He was aware of her listening.

' "They blow up with a rattle", he said.

' "What?" she asked.

' "The leaves".

'She sank away again. The strange leaves beating in the wind on the wood had come nearer than she. The tension in the room was overpowering, it was difficult for him to move his head. He sat with every nerve, every vein, every fibre of muscle in

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his body stretched on a tension. He felt like a broken arch thrust sickeningly out from support. For her response was gone, he thrust at nothing. And he remained himself, he saved himself from crashing down into nothingness, from being squandered into fragments, by sheer tension, sheer backward resistance'.

This is at the time of Lydia's pregnancy, during which 'he went out more often to the Red Lion again, to escape the madness of sitting next to her when she did not belong to him, when she was as absent as any woman in indifference could be'. These strains, with the other disharmonies and the deep antagonisms inevitable when two complex beings with such different pasts are committed to such mutuality in living, are rendered by Lawrence with many varieties of power and subtlety: the endless resource of his art is profound psychological insight. But the marriage prospers, the relation is established:

'What did it matter that Anna Lensky was born of Lydia and Paul? God was her father and her mother. He had passed through the married pair without fully making Himself known to them.

'Now he was declared to Brangwen and to Lydia Brangwen, as they stood together. When at last they had joined hands, the house was finished, and the Lord took up his abode. And they were glad.

. . . . . .

'Anna's soul was at peace between them. She looked from one to the other, and she saw them established to her safety, and she was free. She played between the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud in confidence, having the assurance on her right hand and the assurance on her left. She was no longer called upon to uphold with her childish might the broken end of the arch. Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heavens, and she, the child, was free to play in the space beneath, between'.

Primarily I picked on this passage, where the traditional religious upbringing is so significantly apparent (the abridged quotation comes from the close of Chapter III), because of the way in which the child, Anna, comes in. Lawrence I have remarked, feels with a peculiar responsiveness the paradox of a continuity that is at the same time discontinuity: lives are separate, but life is continuous—it continues in the fresh start by the separate life in each generation. No work, I think, has presented this perception as an imaginatively realized truth more compellingly than *The Rainbow*, or given more subtly in related particular lives the complex movement, or pattern in time, of succeeding (and co-existent) generations. The passage just quoted registers the point in the action at which we begin to know that Anna will be a major representative of our second cycle of life. She starts for us as involved in the earlier, that of Tom Brangwen and her mother.

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Brangwen (a characteristic Laurentian observation) has turned to her ('for her sympathy and her love') in his own emotional insecurity—'they were like lovers, father and child'. And the past weighs on her; she has been 'strained and distorted to support her mother'. But after the birth of the baby and the establishment of the marriage, 'gradually the child was freed'; she 'became an independent, forgetful little soul, loving from her own centre'.

Now, as the new life-cycle emerges, the theme becomes predominantly Anna's growing-up. It is not a sudden complete shift of focus. Of all the vaunted effects of the kind in fiction, none, I think, surpasses what Lawrence has achieved here and elsewhere in *The Rainbow*. The thing is done in very little space; but it is as if, given in day-to-day living, we had the large onward movement of life. We see Anna growing up in that George Eliot world—*moeurs de province*—which is done with more than George Eliot's range and with a subtler and more penetrating, as well as a more vivid notation. As she drives to market at Nottingham or Derby in the trap with Brangwen, we see Anna still as playing a major part in *his* life; but, the developing interest has become very much the part he plays in hers. But, when the great moment in the new life-cycle comes, and she meets her cousin Will, we have it at the same time as, to another effect, a critical moment in the 'father's' life too—the moment when he must take the full impact of the truth that 'there is a generation between them'.

The moment is that at which, looking up into the lighted fowl-loft, he sees, 'blurred through the rain', the 'youth and the girl together, the youth with his back against the wall, his head sunk over the head of the girl', and remembers 'the child he had carried out at night into the barn, while his wife was in labour with the young Tom'. The page of Chapter IV that gives the episode might well be noted as illustrating, in relation to that earlier passage (quoted on page 207 of the last *Scrutiny*), what replaces, in Lawrence's drama, the familiar kinds of organization (plot, fable, climax-and-resolution, and so on) the lack of which has led experienced novel-readers to find that *The Rainbow* has no form and no logic of development—has in sum no dramatic or narrative point (though it obviously offers dramatic and narrative value in great variety). Brangwen's pang, then, thus conveyed, has its part in defining the complex rhythm organizing the book—the movement that, by recurrence along with newness, brings continually a significant recall of what has gone before. The episode of the fowl-loft conveys a rending anguish. Yet this crucial experience in the life-cycle is the occasion for Brangwen's recognizing that his marriage has been a success (if that word belongs in this region):

> 'What was missing in his life that, in his ravening soul, he was not satisfied? He had had that friend at school, his mother, his wife, and Anna. What had he done? He had failed with his friend, he had been a poor son; but he had known satisfaction with his wife, let it be enough; he loathed himself for the state

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he was in over Anna. Yet he was *not* satisfied. It was agony to know it.

'Was his life nothing? Had he nothing to show, no work? He did not count his work, anybody could have done it. What had he known, but the long marital embrace with his wife! Curious, that this was what his life amounted to! At any rate it was something, it was eternal. He could say so to anybody, and be proud of it'.

The recognition of success is there in the word 'eternal', as an examination of its use in *The Rainbow*, and of its relation to the rainbow symbol and to the term, 'fulfilment' will show. Success in a later generation, if there is to be success again, will not be just this success repeated. The questions will demand a more difficult, or a less reductive, answer; satisfaction will be something more complex. That is indicated in the 'bitterness, underneath, that there still remained an unsatisfied Tom Brangwen, who suffered agony because a girl cared nothing for him'. Much more than the feeling of a man for someone of the opposite sex, and much more than any personal relation, is involved:

'He loved his own sons—he had them also. But it was the further, the creative life with the girl, he wanted as well'.

'Further' and 'creative'—here we have the 'beyond' and the 'rainbow'. This is no mere romantic yearning in Brangwen. If the charge that the words have for the reader who has duly taken what has come before in the book is indeterminate, it is not vague in that way. It is indeterminate in the way in which, we noted, the Brangwen's mother's aspiration for her children was indeterminate. There are values, there is a meaning, to be discovered and created in the living, but not, now, by Tom Brangwen. 'She also wanted to know, and to be of the fighting host'. 'How should they learn the entry into the finer, more vivid circle of life?' Tom Brangwen's life, by the measure of those suggestions has been a very limited one. There is a logic (as it were) of development implicit in the presented theme as we have it in the opening of *The Rainbow*.

And in the significantly different histories of his three generations Lawrence is giving an essential part of the history of civilization in England. An interest like his in the deeper life of the psyche cannot be an interest in the individual abstracted from the society to which he belongs.

The conflict that develops rapidly upon the young love of Anna and Will and breaks in upon the honeymoon days (these given in pages that surely form the incomparable classic of the theme in literature), provides pages of *The Rainbow* that have probably been found among the most difficult. Since the conflict is one that they do not themselves understand, and the rendering of it entails the evoking of blind forces in the unconscious, there are indeed what may strike any reader as difficult places. Yet the nature of the conflict should not, after all, be found defeatingly obscure. Anna,

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on the face of it, might seem to be the aggressor. The relevant aspect of her has its clear dramatization in the scene that led to the banning of the book; the scene in which she is surprised by Will dancing the defiant triumph of her pregnancy, naked in her bedroom. She is the Magna Mater, the type-figure adverted to so much in *Women in Love* of a feminine dominance that must defeat the growth of any prosperous long-term relation between a man and a woman.

But we have to recognize that this dominance in Anna has for its complement a dependence in Will. There are passages that convey to us with the most disturbing force the paradoxical insufferableness to Anna of such a dependence, and its self-frustrating disastrousness. This inability to stand alone constitutes a criticism of a positive trait of Will's towards which Anna feels a deep antipathy. In a sense that Lawrence's art defines very clearly, he is religious. It is a religiousness that provokes in Anna a destructive rationalism, and the scenes that give us the clash leave us in no doubt that both attitudes are being criticized. The whole treatment of religion in this chapter, called 'Anna Victrix', which deals with it directly in a sustained way, is very subtle in its distinctions and its delicacies.

When Anna, in church, sees Will absorbed in contemplation of the lamb that, in the stained-glass window, holds a flag in the cleft of its foot, 'dark, violent hatred of her husband' sweeps up in her. She reacts so violently because she has found herself responding to the spell worked by the symbol on her husband: 'the power of the tradition seized on her, she was transported to another world'. She sees that 'the church teaching in itself means nothing to him':

> ' "Why do you never listen to the sermon?" she asked, seething with hostility and violation.
>
> ' "I do", he said.
>
> ' "You don't—you don't hear a single word".'

Yet she herself, we are told, had got no satisfaction from the sermon or the doctrine:

> 'Was this what she had come to hear: how, by doing this thing, and by not doing that, she could save her soul? She did not contradict it. But the pathos of her face gave the lie. There was something else she asked for from the church'.

Nevertheless, she doesn't find it in her husband's religion, which strikes her as dark, and 'caring nothing for humanity'. We cannot take her as, in anything like totality, endorsed, but it is impossible not to register that, however we may judge her own attitudes, Will's religion emerges from the conflict criticized—criticized by the total effect. Nothing would be gained by trying to summarize the argument acted out between them. It is a very impressive illustration of the originality of Lawrence's genius, and its effect is unmistakable enough. The culmination comes in the visit to Lincoln Cathedral that is recorded in the next chapter. The

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sustained stretch of prose that renders Will's ecstasy is not 'poetic prose' in any ordinary suggestion of that phrase. It is a poem rising easily and naturally out of the extreme flexibility of the prose in which *The Rainbow* is written—prose characteristically Lawrence's, but different from that of any book of his before or after. It 'creates the concepts' with which it is concerned. It occupies several pages, and its effect depends upon the sustained exaltation and the significant changes that makes possible. I must, however, represent it by a detached and abridged passage in order to make an essential critical point:

'Then he pushed open the door, and the great, pillared gloom was before him, in which his soul shuddered and rose from her nest. His soul leapt, soared up into the great church. His body stood still, absorbed by the height. His soul leapt up into the gloom, into possession, it reeled, it swooned with a great escape, it quivered in the womb, in the hush and the gloom of fecundity, like seed of procreation in ecstasy.

'She too was overcome with wonder and awe. She followed him in his progress. Here, the twilight was the very essence of life, the coloured darkness was the embryo of all light, and the day. Here, the very first dawn was breaking, the very last sunset sinking, and the immemorial darkness, whereof life's day would blossom and fall away again, re-echoed peace and profound immemorial silence.

'Away from time, always outside of time! Between east and west, between dawn and sunset, the church lay like a seed in silence, dark before germination, silenced after death. Containing birth and death, potential with all the noise and transitation of life, the cathedral remained hushed, a great involved seed, whereof the flower would be radiant life inconceivable, but whose beginning and whose end were the circle of silence. Spanned round with the rainbow, the jewelled gloom folded music upon silence, light upon darkness, fecundity upon death, as a seed folds leaf upon leaf and silence upon the root and the flower, hushing up the secret of all between its parts, the death out of which it fell, the life into which it has dropped, the immortality it involves, and the death it will embrace again.

'Here in the church, "before" and "after" were folded together, all was contained in oneness.

. . . . . .

'And there was no time nor life nor death, but only this, this timeless consummation, where the thrust from earth met the thrust from earth, and the arch was locked on the keystone of ecstasy. This was all, this was everything. Till he came to himself in the world below. Then again he gathered himself together, in transit, every jet of him strained and leaped, leaped clear into the darkness above, to the fecundity and the unique mystery, to the touch, the clasp, the consummation, the climax of eternity, the apex of the arch'.

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So the poem goes on, and we might supposes that Will's religion, offered us at its most impressive in this ecstasy, was being endorsed. But Anna, merged at first into the absoluteness of the exaltation, begins to be a qualifying presence:

> 'After all, there was the sky outside, and in here, in this mysterious half-night, when his soul leapt with the pillars upwards, it was not to the stars and the crystalline dark space, but to meet and clasp with the answering impulse of leaping stone, there in the dusk and secrecy of the roof. The far-off clinching and mating of arches, the leap and thrust of the stone, carrying a great roof overhead, awed and silenced her.
>
> 'But yet—yet she remembered that the open sky was no blue vault, no dark dome hung with many twinkling lamps, but a space where stars were wheeling in freedom, with freedom above them always higher.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> 'Her soul too was carried forward to the altar, to the threshold of Eternity in reverence and fear and joy. But ever she hung back in the transit, mistrusting the culmination of the altar'.

Her qualifying withdrawal, at first itself exalted, becomes more inimically critical: she 'caught at little things which saved her from being swept forward headlong in the tide of passion that leaps on into the Infinite in a great mass, triumphant and flinging its own course'. The little things that arrest her are the carved faces.

> 'These sly little faces peeped out of the grand tide of the cathedral like something that knew better. They knew quite well, these little imps that retorted on man's own illusion, that the cathedral was not absolute. They winked and leered, giving suggestion of the many things that had been left out of the great concept of the church. "However much there is inside here, there's a good deal they haven't got in", the little faces mocked'.

Will himself cannot ignore the criticism. Angrily, and hating her, he admits to himself that there is much outside the church. 'Strive as he would, he could not keep the cathedral wonderful to him'. It is impossible not to register, in the upshot of the argument, that criticism has been established against both parties to the conflict—against both sides of the enacted argument. Her seizing on the carved faces (which are, and very relevantly, there) becomes a lapse into the jeering vein ('The deep root of his enmity lay in the fact that she jeered at his soul').

There is no need here to analyse further the delicacies and subtleties of the whole poetic-dramatic debate (which surely ought to be a *locus classicus*). What we have to note is that the debate is a conflict in the inner life of the married pair, and that the defeat or failure on both sides has its significance in a failure of complete 'fulfilment' in marriage; a failure to 'create' (in a phrase used later of Ursula), here in marriage, 'a new knowledge of Eternity in the flux of time'. The positive religious preoccupation of *The Rainbow*

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is *there*: a 'fulfilled' life has achieved its religious validity. But for Will and Anna the experience at Lincoln is in large measure defeat. Will in the main subsides into an inert day-to-dayness of home, work and church:

> 'His life was shifting its centre, becoming more superficial. He had failed to become really articulate, failed to find real expression. He had to continue in the old form. But in spirit, he was uncreated'.

Anna subsides into motherhood:

> 'Anna was absorbed in the child now, she left her husband to take his own way. She was willing now to postpone all adventure into unknown realities. She had the child, her palpable and immediate future was the child. If her soul had found no utterance, her womb had'.

It is the burden of *The Rainbow*, dealing as it does with the generations, that *this* is not fulfilment. The problem is *here*—it is here now in Anna and in Will—and to bring into the world another life that will be faced with it is not to solve it.

F. R. LEAVIS.

[*To be concluded.*]

NATURE, CORRECTNESS AND DECORUM

I HAVE illustrated[1] the growing disparity, in the course of the seventeenth century, between the two worlds of the man-made or social, and the untouched natural, where these worlds were considered as having philosophical correlatives. The thesis here was that the natural, as coming from the hand of God, was considered both in Elizabethan and in Restoration times as an embodiment of the divine order, or 'reason', (*cf.* the identification continuous through Pope of the 'natural' and the 'reasonable'). The man-made, or social, on the other hand, undergoes a change. In the Elizabethan age, due to the integration, the philosophical duplication, of the social (political, economic, and religious) and the natural, so that they all appeared as reflections of one another and of a Divine order, they could borrow one another's terms without artificiality, and Shakespeare could construct a completely comprehensive drama that was at the same time profoundly social

[1]Earlier in the chapter of which this is a part—*Ed.*

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and profoundly natural, both sensory and abstract, both individual and general, being simultaneously of man and of Nature, of human order and Divine, because interpenetrating all was the same firm and fixed structure, the conception of the social organism, in sickness or in health, in control, or unbalanced by excess. This identification I have suggested as reflected by the picture of an Elizabethan house sprawling naturally in natural grounds, in the confidence that both the man-made and the natural, conceived in this spirit, reflected in their natural state the Divine order. With the Restoration, however, we see what seems to be a 'puzzling parallelism' between the same natural grounds with a house now strictly ordered into a formal order, balance, and 'harmony'. I have suggested that this is the result of man's faith in the natural order of the man-made or social having been undermined, because this human social world had been both torn asunder by the chaos of Civil War and the beheading of the King (even such chaos as follows the murder of the King in *Macbeth*), and by the ascendancy in society, to replace the monarchic order, of a progressive group whose whole ethic was based on flux and free movement rather than on static structure. This group, representing the development to its logical conclusion of economic enterprise which is a major implication of the activity belonging to the period called 'the Renaissance', was therefore centred in urban life, and cities mushroomed in importance to overshadow the agrarian world which had formed the basis of the old monarchic hierarchy. The parallel disruption in religion, centring around the individualism and spiritual enterprise of the Puritans, has been amply discussed. For the defenders of the old faith, which group included most of the men specifically interested in literature, there was now a sad antagonism of natural order to social and man-made chaos, and no longer a faith that man's natural expression would have anything of order about it unless he took things in hand with firm and reasoned control, and put the order there himself. Left to roam by his own lights, the result was all too obvious and frightening and the myth that, since his disobedience in the Garden of Nature, Man was cursed with his sin unless he took himself in conscious control, became story which seemed most appropriate, and most forcefully and regrettably true. So no longer did the man-made structure, the house, roam naturally over the garden and grounds, but was taken in hand and ordered by will and reason into the sort of obvious control which had to be imposed by the hand if it were to exist. Nature might still reflect Divine order, but as for sinful Man, the responsibility lay no longer with God, but with himself. There was no more confidence in an organic and unstudied parallel—Man must have order back, but it was up to him to make it, and 'the World was all before them, where to choose their place of rest'. There were some who 'through Eden took their solitary way', and retired like Cowley to the country, to write of the virtues of gardens and of solitude. They shunned 'the populous town', and found comfort and support in the order of Nature, which was un-

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disturbed and undisturbable—as changeless, in fact, as the classical past of Golden Greece and Rome, whose harmonious lineaments seemed as worthy of emulation. But obviously, and even apparent to those proponents of anti-social tactics, this was a short-range evasion of the major and irreversible development in the history of their culture. What, then, of those who stayed in the urban milieu, or, even more useful, of the young men such as John Dryden, representing the next generation, who actually came to the City from, as in his case, a small Northamptonshire village, because for them it was the way of the future and the path to success? Dryden's case is one worth thorough attention, since he became Poet Laureate and the literary standard of his age. He is the first good and important example of those who made the new urban conditions the conditions of their creative activity in the world of letters.

We should first recall the urban picture, and stress the fact that the City was not all of a piece, but sadly, even hysterically, divided against itself. If the old monarchy had permeated the social organism from roots to crown, the restored court sat uneasily on top of a flourishing and self-sufficient body of merchants, who in the very principles of their ethics and religion were diametrically opposed to the conceptions which the Court wanted to perpetuate. This body of hard-working and enterprising citizenry had solidified and extended its position independently through the many years of the King's absence, and were in financial control of the country upon his return. The Court recognized its old enemies, and cocked a snook at them at every opportunity by flaunting its own licence and privilege, but this did the Court little good and only provoked a showdown before the century was out which fairly well quenched their by then flagging spirits. But in addition to this bellicose obligation to offend the standards of the solid bourgeoisie, it was natural that the court should really go rotten in and of itself, since its position was so superficial and dependent that it was more like a bad appendix than that combination of head and heart which it could once lay claim to. The merchants of the City held that all-powerful weapon, the credit balance, and the King's faction had to bow to it, and to the standards which went with it. I referred earlier to Pepy's apprehensions on hearing the news 'that the King did intend to borrow some money of the City', since, he says, 'for the King to ask it and be denied, will be the beginning of our sorrow'. Furthermore, the City could and did exercise this power in such way as to control the behaviour of the Court, and to call its manner of behaviour into public question. Sedley's antics on the balcony did not slip by unanswered. Burnet records in 1668 that:

> 'The Court was become profligate, and the nation not a little offended at the Parliament for giving away money so lavishly to feed and sustain their vices'.

and that

> 'The resentment of this raised a party among the Commons

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that opposed the measures of the Court, and appeared at all times against such profuse liberality'.[2]

This committee (the Brook House Committee) carried out an inquiry of the sort we are come to be familiar with in our own day, and

> 'When this committee came to make their inquiry, the carelessness and luxury of the Court were so much exposed, that the King's spirit was highly exasperated at it, and the flatterers about him began to magnify the happy advantages of a more absolute and uncontrollable dominion'.[3]

Of the idleness of such counsel, those who transacted the King's business could testify, and the Civil War was a fresh memory.

So the Court, having really very little to do with the nation's life, and frequently arousing public indignation, went its idle way. That quality of monarchy which had once been the key to a whole philosophy of order and stability had given place to a form for which the entire case was made in terms of outward garb; inwardly the true condition as little resembled an organic reality as the contents of the 'second temple' resembled the classical original. Its public outlet was the theatre—a special theatre attended by its own class, and comprising their plaything and their pulpit. As the former, Burnet says the theatres were

> '. . . a monster of immodesty and impurity of all sorts, defiled beyond all example and become nests of prostitution'.[4]

As the latter, they put forth such affirmations of obligations to monarchy as I have cited in the heroic tragedies, and in the comedies combined amusement with a school for social decorum, the creation of an ideal 'gentleman' or 'beau' by the ridiculing of inappropriate qualities. Since the Court position was primarily anti-middle class, the necessary compunction of this code of manners was that it flout 'bourgeois morality', so the *beau idéal* had to be as lecherous and amoral as possible, affect correctly the Gallicisms of the King's entourage, along with a whole patois of 'witty' speech, an exaggerated, periwigged modishness of dress, and a convention of properly improper behaviour. Collier, in 1698, delivering the long awaited and death-dealing bourgeois blow to the theatre, which was by that time faint of its own insipidity and rootless triviality, described this ideal as follows:

> 'To sum up the evidence, A fine Gentleman is a fine Whoring, Swearing, Smutty, Atheistical Man. These qualifications, it seems, complete the idea of Honour. They are the Top-Improvements of Fortune, and the distinguishing Glories of Birth and Breeding!

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[2]Bishop Gilbert Burnet, *The History of His Own Times*, (first pub. 1724) London, Gibbings and Company, 1903, p. 107.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 105.
[4]*Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

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> This is the Stage-Test for Quality, and those that cant stand it ought to be Disclaimed. The restraints of Conscience are unbecoming a Cavalier . . . . You have here a Man of Breeding and Figure that burlesques the Bible, Swears and talks Smut to Ladies, speaks ill of a Friend behind his Back and betrays his Interest. A Fine Gentleman that has neither Honesty, nor Honour, Conscience nor Manners, Good Nature nor Civill Hypocrisy. Fine only in the Insignificancy of Life, the Abuse of Religion, and the Scandals of Conversation. These Worshipful Things are the Poets Favourites. They appear at the Head of Fashion, and Shine in Character and Equipage'.[5]

But a too literary perspective is apt to lead us to over-stress the theatre, and Collier's diatribe. The fact is that, considering the social picture as a whole, if the Court mattered little, the theatre mattered less.

As the Court had its public centre in the theatre, the bourgeoisie had its public centre in the Coffee-Houses. These began under the Interregnum—the first dated from 1652—and became important centres for the pleasant transaction of business and social contact with other men of the City—the sort of function now performed in a scheduled way by the Rotary Clubs. Beljame describes them as follows:

> '. . . they had quickly taken root and grown and multiplied with amazing rapidity . . . . The Coffee-House had gradually come to play an important part in the Londoner's life. It was there that he met his friends, that he made his business appointments, that he had his letters addressed, and that he often spent his evenings . . . . The Coffee-House became a sort of small-scale Club, where people read newspapers and pamphlets aloud, or where impromptu orators held forth for or against Whigs or Tories. In all these places, views and opinions were poured forth with a freedom which the Press, supervised and spied upon as it was, could not know . . . . These eating-places provided rallying-points. People met, exchanged opinions, formed groups, gathered number. It was through them, in short, that a public opinion began to evolve, which thereafter had to be reckoned with'.[6]

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[5]Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, London, 1698, p. 144.

[6]Beljame, *op. cit.*, p. 162. A descriptive note is found in the opening of one of Richard Steele's amorous epistles, August 30, 1707, which begins:

> 'Madam:
>
> I begg pardon that my paper is not guilt, but I am forc'd to write from a Coffee-house where I am attending about business. There is a dirty Crowd of Busie faces all around me talking politics and managing Stocks, while all my Ambition, all my Wealth is Love'.

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This milieu would rightly appear to have little affinity with the theatre world described above, and one would oppose rather than associate the two. Yet high on the rolls of prominence and accomplishment in both theatre and Coffee-House stood the name of John Dryden, Gent.

This is, of course, no puzzle, but an explanation. Dryden's beginnings were on the side of the bourgeoisie, and his attitude of progress and success by any means which did no violence to *anständigkeit*,[7] was altogether consonant with his upbringing in a Puritan household in sympathy with the Revolution. And like any ambitious merchant, he went to the stronghold of London to peddle his wares, which consisted of the products of his literary talent. His aim was public and pecuniary success. Never does Dryden seem to forsake this attitude, and the oft-remarked vacillations of his public principles are given their most credible underlying consistency by their conformance with this guiding principle. (At least, I find this explanation more convincing than L. I. Bredvold's summonings of Montaigne's philosophy, Pyrrhonism, and classical Stoicism to produce a serious sceptical frame of mind as Dryden's mainspring—though here one cannot disprove, but only doubt the effective relevance of such abstract complexities when simpler and more material answers are so close at hand). In a period which sees the effective birth of an urban commercial civilization and sees London change from a market town to a business metropolis, Dryden comes forth as the first openly professional writer, a literary journalist. When he surveyed his market, the two most likely channels were the Court theatre and the City bookstall. Though his plays were no different from those written by members of the Court group, he was careful to keep his own character free from any implications of immorality. While Collier's sketch of the stage-gentleman comes not too far from the actual antics of the Rochester-Dorset-Sedley group, Dryden is constantly affirming his own respectability, in such passages as:

> 'More libels have been written against me than almost any man now living; and I had reason to my side, to have defended my own innocence. I speak not of my poetry, ... I speak of my morals, which have been sufficiently aspersed: that only sort of reputation ought to be dear to every man, and is to me'.[8]

His plays were as obscene as those of his colleagues, though never having what he himself praised as the best quality of Restoration

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[7]Dryden, *Examen Poeticum*, (1693) ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 7.

> 'However it be, I dare establish it for a rule of practice on the stage, that we are bound to please those we pretend to entertain, and that at any price, religion and good manners only excepted'.

[8]Dryden, *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, (1693), ed Ker, Vol. II, p. 80.

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comedy, its 'fashionable cut'. Etherege told him that he lacked the necessary 'noble laziness of mind' which was a polite way of telling him that he was not to the manner born. The number of his dramatic works, however, mounts to a formidable figure. But by the later years of the century the theatre was no longer a prosperous market, and Collier's opinions had gained enough bourgeois backing to become current in the Coffee-Houses. Dryden had left off writing for the stage, so he publicly recanted of that work, and solidified himself with the bourgeoisie. He wrote:

> 'I shall say the less of Mr. Collier because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, of immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance'.[9]

By this time Dryden was relying on the sale of his translations (this is from the *Preface to the Fables*), and it was the City bookstall which had to be appealed to. We find such appeals as:

> '. . . provided I meet with those encouragements from the public which may enable me to proceed in my undertaking with some cheerfulness'.[10]

And such encouragement had to be bargained for, 'at any price, religion and good manners only excepted'. On the other hand, there was still patronage from the Court set as a possible source of income, so a bid had also constantly to be made in that direction. His *Miscellany Poems, Part III*, had to be addressed to Lord Radcliffe as coming from 'an injured man who would be telling his tale unseasonable to his betters' and to refer to Dorset (the same who had capered on the balcony to the public indignation) as 'the best poet and the best patron'. We might ask what all this had to do with a study of language, and of poetry. Dryden is obviously playing the success game on all sides as best he knows how, and it is unfair to judge him by any other standards. However, we must note that this represents the social conditions of literature, and the dependence of literary work on immediate outward success dictates its nature. Out of Dryden's desire for social as well as pecuniary success, he develops a peculiar snob standard in his literary criticism, and purports to follow it in his work, as well as drawing others in line with it. For when we speak of the bourgeois ideal of 'success', we do not mean only financial profit, but the compulsion to rise in the social

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[9]Dryden, *Preface to the Fables* (1700) ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 272. Collier writes, *op. cit.*, p. 9. 'Are these the Tender Things Mr. Dryden says the Ladys call on him for?'

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 25.

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scale, and to flaunt this progress in the public eye. The 'bourgeois' is, in the end, an attitude of mind, rather than a statistically verifiable condition. If we reduce the case of Dryden, for example, to simply the pecuniary profit motive, we would be overlooking that which is perhaps his prime bourgeois trait, his desire for solidarity with 'people of quality'. And however scandalous or insecure the actual Court of the Restoration might have been, tradition preserved its place as representing the top of the social scale, and provided the way were open, the logical goal of every enterprising climber. The inner contradiction of the position of the Restoration bourgeoisie lay in this, that however strong was their opposition on grounds of economics and politics to the static conservatism embodied in King and Court, the social position occupied by that group was the natural desire of anyone whose principles dictated that he rise as close to the top as possible. So Dryden's natural aspiration is not only directed toward building up his material fortune, but also toward achieving the level of social position designated by the word 'gentleman'. He expresses this as literary criticism in such a passage as follows:

> 'I have always acknowledged the wit of our predecessors, with all the veneration that becomes me; but I am sure, their wit was not that of gentlemen: there was ever somewhat ill-bred and clownish in it, and which confessed the conversation of the authors.
>
> And this leads me to the last and greatest advantage of our writing, which proceeds from *conversation*. In the age wherein those poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours; neither did they keep the best company of theirs. Their fortune had been much like that of Epicurus, in the retirement of his gardens; to live almost unknown, and to be celebrated after their decease. I cannot find that any of them had been conversant in courts, except Ben Jonson, and his genius lay not so much that way as to make an improvement by it. Greatness was not then so easy of access, nor conversation so free, as now it is'.[11]

To overlook or excuse the implications of such an insufferable statement, coming from the major poet of his age writing about the poetry of England up to his time, would be to avoid the major standard of value for Dryden and for his period. The very conditions of the Elizabethan writers, for which Dryden offers his condescending condolences, actually comprised their greatest assets, and permitted their work to be executed on a level superior to Dryden's—an artistic rather than a society level. That it was their fortune 'to live almost unknown, and be celebrated after their decease', points to one of the strongest guardians of the creative attitude, lack of self-consciousness and of public success standards.

[11]Dryden, *Defence of the Epilogue; Or An Essay On The Dramatic Poetry of The Past Age* (1672), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 174.

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Even Court literature was more private, because the Court was more private. But in Dryden's time, as I have indicated, literature had become a commodity, for pecuniary and social success, so its mind was no longer its own. It had become equivalent to the periwig, or the fashionable coat, or the 'proper conversation' all simply current tender for social position. As Dryden writes, 'the language is become more courtly, and our thoughts are better dressed'.[12] The use of the term 'wit' in the above passage, as being 'of gentlemen', probably represents the major change in the career of the term. In the brief interval between the 'previous age' and the Restoration world, it has altered from being a play of intelligence within the organized framework of man and nature, to become instead a clever facility in well-bred conversation. Dryden excuses the earlier poets on the grounds that 'greatness', that is, the status represented by King and Court, 'was not so easy of access'. This easiness of access made Dryden's 'gentlemanly' position possible, but we can see behind it the breakdown of the old framework of social order; a breakdown which, whatever the gain, had a disastrous effect on such responses as are represented by poetry. When art becomes a social weapon, or becomes in any way materially involved in a scheme extraneous to its nature, it loses that disinterestedness which alone assures profundity, and the vitality of the finer responses which should be part of its definition. Though nothing but the capacity of the artist can *guarantee* such a production, the 'previous age' provided the conditions congenial to such a realization. The social ladder in those times was not to be scaled in this way. A gentleman was born, not made by his manners and graces; as Tawney said 'their aim was to crystallize existing class relationships', 'movement means disturbance', etc. Whatever may be said against this, as well as giving the artist a stable framework of values, a ready-made form, to work with (which was co-extensive with the prevailing ideas of religion, nature and the personality of the individual *actually existing in life*, thus producing that much sought and invigorating identification of art and life), it did also prevent this disastrous adoption of art as a means to an end extraneous to its ideal nature. In Dryden's time, the King had so cheapened himself, the Court had become so dependent on the City, and, in the absence of real solidity, manners and dress had become so much the determinent of position, that the way was open for the ascent of the type represented by Dryden, the ambitious compromise figure of the *bourgeois gentilhomme*. Dryden aspired to the social distinction of the Court gentleman, but he was too divided to be able to endorse the licentious and immoral behaviour which accompanied the actual figures of Charles's Court. When he takes over the term, we see the beginning of the most significant change in its career. Dryden could not publicly propose as a standard of correctness and propriety such a 'fine Gentleman' as was set forth in the character by Collier, or was found in the flesh, as a public scandal,

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

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in the persons of the various raffish roisterers of the Court. Dryden was too near the City for that, and he had to sit easily in the arm-chair reserved permanently for him at Will's Coffee-House, 'the centre of literary London', as well as to sell popularly on the City bookstalls. Considerations and position compel Dryden to make such declarations as the following:

> 'May I have leave to do myself the justice (since my enemies will do me none, and are so far from granting me to be a good poet that they will not allow me so much as to be a Christian, or a moral man), may I have leave, I say, to inform my reader that I have confined my choice to such tales of Chaucer as savor nothing of immodesty. If I had desired more to please than to instruct, the Reeve, the Miller, the Shipman, the Merchant, the Sumner, and, above all, the Wife of Bath, in the Prologue to her Tale, would have procured me as many friends and readers as there are beaux and ladies of pleasure in the town. But I will offend no more against good manners: I am sensible as I ought to be of the scandal I have given by my loose writings; and make what reparation I am able, by this public acknowledgment. If anything of this nature or of profaneness be crept into these poems, I am so far from defending it, that I disown it'.[13]

So Dryden's 'gentleman', like so much else about Dryden, had to be a bourgeois compromise—he had to combine the 'gallantry and civility' and the elegant airs of the Court rake with the respectability and morals of the merchant townsman. The typical bourgeois double standard which prevailed in Dryden's time in regard to the Court, theatre, etc., is exemplified by the candid revelation of Pepys:

> 'To the King's playhouse, and there did see a good part of *The English Monsieur*, which is a mighty pretty play, very witty and pleasant. And the women do very well; but, above all, little Nelly, that I am mightily pleased with the play, and much with the house, more than ever I expected, the women doing better than ever I expected, and very fine women. Here I was in pain to be seen, and hid myself; but, as God would have it, Sir John Chichly come, and sat just by me'.[14]

The Coffee-House is Dryden's real milieu—he was almost always to be found there—and the Coffee-House standard was the one which was steadily gaining ground, and was to prevail. We have not far to go into the early eighteenth century to find such an appraisal as the following passage from *The Spectator*, describing 'A Coffee-House and Its Frequenters':

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[13]Dryden, *Preface to the Fables*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 262.

[14]Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, December 8, 1666.

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'I do not know that I meet in any of my walks, objects which move both my spleen and laughter so effectually as those young fellows at the Grecian, Squire's, Searle's and all other coffee-houses adjacent to the law, who rise early for no other pupose but to publish their laziness. One would think these young virtuosos take a gay cap and slippers, with a scarf and party-colored gown, to be ensigns of dignity; for the vain things approach each other with an air, which shows they regard one another for their vestments. I have observed that the superiority among these proceeds from an opinion of gallantry and of fashion. The gentleman in the straw-berry sash, who presides so much over the rest, has, it seems, subscribed to every opera this last winter, and is supposed to receive favours from one of the actresses.

When the day grows too busy for these gentlemen to enjoy any longer the pleasures of their deshabille with any manner of confidence, they give place to men who have business or good sense in their faces, and come to the coffee-house either to transact affairs, or enjoy conversation. The persons to whose behaviour and discourse I have most regard, are such as are between these two sorts of men; such as have not spirits too active to be happy and well pleased in a private condition, nor complexions too warm to make them neglect the duties and relations of life. Of these sort of men consist the worthier part of mankind; of these are all good fathers, generous brothers, friends and faithful subjects. Their entertainments are derived rather from reason than imagination; which is the cause that there is no impatience or instability in their speech or action. You see in their countenances they are at home, and in quiet possession of their present instant, without desiring to quicken it by gratifying any passion, or prosecuting any new design. These are the men formed for society, and those little communities which we express by the word neighborhoods'.[15]

Dryden could see in his own time that 'the day grows too busy for these gentlemen to enjoy any longer the pleasures of their deshabille with any manner of confidence'—in fact, he himself in spirit and in truth, was one of those 'men who have business or good sense in their faces' to whom the 'vain things' must 'give place'. Yet he would be 'John Dryden, Gent.' and keep the best company', since the Court group obviously represented the top in social prestige, and such company had become 'easy of access'. It was the reliance on external appearances, as I have indicated, which made this type of ascent possible. Since the real internal framework of the monarchic social system had collapsed, and since fluid movement was of the essence of the progressive forces, appearance was everything, the sole indicator. The distinguishing appearance of the Court group was exaggerated into absurd fashions; their badge had to be worn as affirmatively as possible. Like the classical facade, it had to be put up. But if appearance were the means, anyone could adopt it,

[15]Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 49, April 26, 1711.

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and put on the fashionable cut, and as they did, the old dividing lines weakened and faded. Clothes made the man, technique made the poem, and public opinion made the poet; Dryden's constant reference to his 'bays' constitutes a hallmark of the bourgeois artist—that is, to establish himself by his conventional accoutrements, to *look* like an artist. It is not unrelated to flowing ties, long hair, and berets, which accompany a later age. One could say of the Restoration *beau monde*, which contained and imitated the Court standard, that 'they regard one another for their vestments', and 'that the superiority among these proceeds from an opinion of gallantry and of fashion'. But the degree to which this exterior represents the major current of social life, or relates to the responsible aims and attitudes toward which Dryden's own natural milieu was rapidly moving, can be judged by the passage from *The Spectator*, where latter-day remnants of such standards rouse both 'spleen and laughter'. The transitional character of Dryden's age even denied him the integrity of being a pure and solid bourgeois—it really left him, if he were to pursue the lights of success, cut off from responsible contact with *any* firm body of material—at least from the type of identification with and belief in such material as would have lent living substance to his work. His 'language is become more courtly', and his 'thoughts are better dressed'; these were the terms of success, and his literary touchstones, often applied with a nettling *nouveau-richisme* of 'manners'. He makes them not only the practical, but the general and philosophical rule. When he writes of Ben Jonson:

> 'The poets of this age will be more wary than to imitate the meanness of his persons. Gentlemen will now be entertained by the follies of each other; and though they will allow Cobb and Tib to speak properly, yet they are not much pleased with their tankard or their rage. And surely their conversation can be no jest to them on the theatre when they would avoid it in the street'.[16]

We may excuse him on the grounds that he is giving practical advice as a guide to success for any aspiring authors, who must needs pander to the taste of the market. However, he also espouses these standards in his own voice, and generalizes them into a more absolute canon of intrinsic literary quality:

> 'Let us ascribe to the gallantry and civility of our age the advantage which we have above them, and to our knowledge of the customs and manner of it, the happiness we have to please beyond them'.[17]

If the test of the subject matter was that its persons should exhibit

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[16]Dryden, *Defence of the Epilogue*, ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 177.

[17]*Ibid., loc. cit.*

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the proper manners, the concomitant test of the linguistic medium was that it move smoothly and easily, have a pleasant sound, and commit no grammatical impropriety. Literary style was to be the written counterpart of polite conversation. Dryden says

> Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
> In conversation, than those poets writ.[18]

and the much admired speech-tone of Dryden's 'natural' style in prose has as its regrettable corollary the limiting identification of literature with the merest surfaces of life. When Dryden says:

> 'It is therefore my part to make it clear that the language, wit, and conversation of our age are improved and refined above the last'.[19]

he has made a collocation of terms which almost precludes the use of language which the nature of poetry demands. The external approach to language, as being a branch of manners, exalts, of all things, the grammatical rules, and Dryden's criticism of the Elizabethan literature stresses the absolute test that it does not conform to rules of grammar which were codified after that literature had been written. He says

> 'I was speaking of their sense and language; and I dare almost challenge any man to show me a page together which is correct in both'.[20]

or again,

> '. . . let any man who understands English read diligently the works of Shakespeare or Fletcher, and I dare undertake that he will find in every page either some solecism of speech, or some notorious flaw in sense; and yet these men are revered, when we are not forgiven'.[21]

So Dryden combs Ben Jonson and Shakespeare for split infinitives and sentences ending with a preposition. A badly placed verb, or the use of the pronoun *one* in the plural, was akin to having an ill-fitting periwig, or one's gaiters badly adjusted. In that self-conscious age, where manner and appearance had replaced structure, and counted for everything since there was no other determinant, the slightest of these aberrations was laughed at in public, and since immediate public success, the celebration of one *before* his decease, was all-important by bourgeois standards, external propriety far outweighed any other considerations. The conclusion of the above

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[18]Dryden, *Epilogue to the Second Part of 'The Conquest of Granada'*.

[19]Dryden, *Defence of the Epilogue*, ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 163.

[20]*Ibid.*, p. 167.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 165.

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passage accents this aspect, and the sentiment is oft-repeated by Dryden:

> But, were they now to write, when critics weigh
> Each line, and ev'ry word, throughout the play.[22]

However, they had, instead, the great good fortune 'to live almost unknown, and be celebrated after their decease'.

The whole social picture, then, of internal flux and emptiness with an external facade of 'decorum' which provided the terms of progress and position, was behind Dryden's devotion to manner rather than matter, and his exaltation of technique above all else, albeit a technique applied from the outside, depending on such external means as grammar, 'The ornament of words',[23] and the 'well-placing of words, for the sweetness of pronunciation' which 'was not known until Mr. Waller introduced it'.[24] Like so many other of the manufactured and artificial versions of order which the chaos and progressive character of this period threw up to comfort and stabilize itself, this one had very little relation to what was inside the work, and indeed there was usually very little inside the work at all in those times, unless it was some contemporary and mundane event related to the struggle for success on the part of conflicting parties. Mark Van Doren has observed that:

> 'Dryden lacks that organic conception of man and nature which gives what is called insight. He cannot compress a large amount of emotional experience into a single phrase'.[25]

But everything went to postulate for Dryden's times an approach quite the contrary. The harmony of numbers and parts, however, was a desirable exterior, and the technician who thought, like Dryden, that 'versification and numbers are the greatest pleasures of poetry'[26] was the logical figure of the age. The best defences and eulogies of Dryden have been made in terms of his skill as a versifier, and Van Doren, whose work has made the most able case for Dryden in our day, made it in terms of Dryden's technical skill, and called him pre-eminently a poet's poet. But we may still ask, should this be a poet's poet? To be sure, the technician who can be brilliantly insincere, and say anything well if it is called for, develops a great surface skill, and a command of the sounds and proprieties with which he works. But Dryden's strictures beyond this surface seem only to be negative ones, dictated by bourgeois standards:

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[22]Dryden, *Epilogue to 'The Conquest of Granada'*.

[23]Dryden, *Postscript to Dedication of Æneis*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 241.

[24]Dryden, *Defence of the Epilogue*, ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 169.

[25]Mark Van Doren, *The Poetry of John Dryden*, Minority Press, Cambridge, 1931, p. 39.

[26]Dryden, *Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 86.

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> '. . . supposing verses are never so beautiful or pleasing, yet, if they contain anything which shocks religion or good manners . . .'.[27]

and we might wonder if Dryden's approach is even tenable means to technique, or whether its fundamental implications might not be entirely pernicious to the concept of artistic creation. We cannot fail to see that there must be something more to a living piece of work—that it is not just a thought delivered up in a fashionable coat of metres and rhymes, and we ask ourselves where 'technique' should really come from, and what should be its relationship with that which it is designed to convey. For Dryden, the relationship apparently was negligible if even existent. One of his most telling statements is the following, written toward the end of his career:

> . . . thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me that my only difficulty is to choose or reject, to run them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose; I have so long studied and practised both that they are grown a habit and become familiar to me'.[28]

I would insist that for a real poet such a choice could not exist, that the distinction between poetry and prose is a far deeper one than that which Dryden implies—merely a difference in the 'harmony' with which a thought is dressed up. Such a surface distinction will hold with Dryden's work, but it won't for Shakespeare's. Nor would I expect much of real poetic response from the man for whom both prose and poetry 'are grown a habit'. Van Doren has written that 'Dryden was most at home when making statements . . . . At his best he wrote without figures . . .',[29] but Van Doren would certainly not argue that the garnishing of any number of 'figures' had anything to do with the sort of control organization of experience and values which must dictate the externals of a poem. I have dealt at length with the separating out of the elements of mental and sensory which allowed for such an approach as Dryden's—he is indeed a child of his time. It contained for poetry the seeds of disaster. And as for relying on technique, applied as Dryden's was, to produce poetry, I would endorse the view of Professor Grierson:

> 'With all his great gifts, Dryden was not a great poet because he believed in nothing. Whether it be eulogies or elegies, or heroic play or poem, or satire or religious apologies in verse, all is for him business or art—business inasmuch as he must live and these are the goods in demand, art inasmuch as he has a good craftsman's delight in his craft. He never writes as one inspired by his subject in itself, which Dante declares is the secret of great

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[27]Dryden, *Preface to the Fables*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 251.
[28]*Ibid.*, p. 249.
[29]Van Doren, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

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> poetry . . . . Dryden is proof that . . . technique is not everything, that there is also the content, the spirit of the work, what it does communicate, on the character of which will also depend a great deal of what is subtlest and finest in the workmanship'.[30]

I have tried to develop some of the reasons why Dryden believed in nothing, and why any estimate of his works is so much an estimate of his period, and of the conditions which produced and controlled him. As an examination, in the period in England which saw its beginnings, of the character and implications of the bourgeois attitude in art, it has many aspects relevant to our own time, and to the intervening centuries. However, when the issue is thus raised of properly evaluating the 'craftsman' or 'technician' approach to poetry, Professor Grierson's last statement is the thesis which remains to be tested and demonstrated. I have indicated that Shakespeare's technique is actually a character evolving from the fundamental internal order of his subject matter, and that on this depended the subtlety and fineness of his workmanship as it shows itself in the vitality of his language and the creative relevancy of his imagery—that the 'technique' and content are inseparable. So we are brought again to the necessity of looking at these two types of workmanship side by side, and to prove our case by the only decisive test, the examination of the language, structure, and vitality of the poetry itself.

Having arrived again, then, at the language of the poetry—that is, the control which brings certain words together in a certain organization within a poem—as the focus where we can actually feel the pulse of the work, it might be germane to conclude a background study with a brief survey of some of the ways by which the themes examined in this chapter were also expressed directly as theories of reforms of the English language itself in the period under examination. We are easily able to do this because the attention to manner just discussed—the whole shift from attention to subject matter toward a self-conscious focus on the medium itself, 'technique' and 'language' provides a plethora of documentary evidence.

The line first discussed was the anti-urban revolt; the return to Nature and the comforting structure of natural philosophy. It was an evasion of the real trouble, which boiled in the cities, but it had its clear impact on the language. The example used was the late Cowley, and when he wrote of his garden:

> Oh, who would change these soft, yet solid joys
> For empty shows and senseless noise;
> And all which rank ambition breeds.[31]

he prescribed, in the phrase 'soft, yet solid', the character which the period attempted to impress upon its language. This quality was

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[30]H. J. C. Grierson, *Cross Currents in English Literature of the XVIIth Century*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1948, p. 318.
[31]Cowley, *The Garden*, stanza 1.

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felt as derivable from the work of the hand of God, if not from the activity of men:

> For God, the Universal Architect,
> 'T had been as easy to erect
> A Louvre or Escurial, or a tow'r
> That might with Heav'n communication hold,
> As Babel vainly thought to do of old:
> He wanted not the skill or pow'r;
> In the world's fabric those were shown,
> And the materials were all His own.[32]

So, rather than the confusion of language associated with the man-made tower of Babel[33] 'communication' must be established through a *natural* language, not only 'soft, yet solid', but clear and orderly.[34] The concomitant movement to incorporate this idea of order in the architecture itself, I have discussed. It was an attempt to reinstate the Divine order of the Universal Architect—and this order was directly connected in the minds of the Restoration Royalists (indeed, in the minds of everyone who was disturbed by the chaotic aspects of progressivism) with the old order of the monarchy, which held by Divine right. Dryden, in his hopeful *Astraea Redux* of 1660, makes such connection for us, in his lines on General Monk, who restored the King:

> 'Twas Monk, whom Providence design'd to loose
> Those real bonds false freedom did impose.
> The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene
> Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean
> To see small clues draw vastest weights along,

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[32] *Ibid.*, stanza 3.

[33] 'But all this language gotten and augmented by Adam and his posterity, was again lost at the tower of *Babel*, when by the hand of God, every man was stricken for his rebellion, with an oblivion of his former language'.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Chap. IV, 'Of Speech' (1651), ed. A. R. Waller, Cambridge English Classics, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1904, p. 14.

[34] 'Seeing then that truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affections, a man that seeketh precise truth, had need to remember what every name he uses pleads for; and to place it accordingly . . . and therefore in Geometry (which is the only science that it hath pleased God to bestow on mankind), men begin at settling the significations of words, which settling of significations, they call Definitions; and place them in the beginning of their reckoning'.

Ibid., p. 17.

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Not in their bulk but in their order strong.
. . . .
How hard was then his task, at once to be
What in the body natural we see;
Man's architect distinctly did ordain
The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,
Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense,
The springs of motion from the seat of sense.

This last represents, of course, the work of Harvey, and in general, the work of the Royal Society in 'natural philosophy'. The prevalence of this pattern of thought is witnessed by its appearance in the contemporary writings of Thomas Traherne, religious mystic and son of a Hereford shoemaker. He says in *The Person*:

The naked things
Are most sublime, and brightest show,
When they alone are seen:
Men's hands than angel's sings
Are truer wealth ev'n here below:
For those but seem,
Their worth they then do best reveal,
When we all metaphors remove,
For metaphors conceal,
And only vapours prove.
They best are blazon'd when we see
The anatomy,
Survey the skin, cut up the flesh, the veins
Unfold: the glory there remains.
The muscles, fibres, arteries, and bones
Are better far than crowns and precious stones.

Metaphors, then, in this natural language, are to be considered as removable and untrustworthy; only the indisputable fact itself is to be presented, in language as close to clear plain statement as possible—the facts will then provide their own best glory, which does not need the 'crowns and precious stones' of metaphor. Traherne's phrasing of his religious sentiments applies equally as a standard for the character of the reformed language. He writes:

> 'I will not by the noise of bloody wars and the dethroning of kings advance you to glory, but by the gentle ways of peace and love . . . . Even so God, designing to show you his love in exalting you, hath chosen the ways of ease and repose by which you should ascend. And I after His similitude will lead you into paths plain and familiar, where all envy, rapine, bloodshed, complaint and malice shall be far removed'.[35]

[35]Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations* (pub. 1908), 'The First Century', Section IV.

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And, as we have seen Sprat to afford the most explicit connection between the attitude of the natural philosophers and the contrasted 'ambitious disquiets' which disturb the social picture, so he also gives us the most clearly formulated description of their correlated programme for 'a great reformation in the manner of our speaking and writing'.[36] After his discussion of England's advantages for nurturing such a society—centring around such observations as, 'Amsterdam is a place of trade, without the mixture of men of freer thought', whereas the English merchants have 'in their behaviour very much of the gentility of the families from which so many of them are descended'[37]—Sprat treats of 'their manner of discourse':

> '. . . and that has been a constant resolution to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style; to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men delivered so many *things* almost in an equal number of *words*. They have exacted from all their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking, positive expressions, clear senses, a native easiness; bringing all thing as near the mathematical plainness as they can'.[38]

Dryden, we might suppose, would have censured the solecism of redundancy in the phrase 'to return back', but the idea of a return to a primitive purity suggests the Prelapsarian sentiment so pervasive in this period. The 'simplicity of childhood' vision of Henry Vaughan is perhaps not unrelated—the same trend in Wordsworth can clearly be shown as directly related to his interest in the post-Hobbesian sensational empiricism of the nineteenth-century associational psychologists. Milton's cherished vision of an early world of purity led him back to Spenser as his acknowledged original, and also to the early world of antiquity, which he reflected in his vocabulary by the employment of root-meanings—'pontifical' as meaning 'bridge-like', etc. They were all ways out of turmoil, long glances backward, versions of stability and security. Wordsworth's was perhaps grounded in the aftermath of another social revolution, that time in France, and another disillusionment over the actions of political humanity. The statement evolved by Miss Miles, from her statistical study quoted earlier,[39] that 'the literal expressive

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[36]Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society*, First Part, Section XX.

[37]*Ibid.*, Second Part, Section XI.

[38]Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society*, Second Part, Section XX. See also Joseph Glanvill, *Scepsis Scientifica*:

> '. . . my present relish and genius, which is more gratified with manly sense, flowing in a natural and unaffected eloquence, than in the musick and curiosity of fine metaphors and dancing periods'.

The introductory 'Address to the Royal Society', ed. Owen (1885), p. lxix.

[39]See *Scrutiny*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, p. 176.

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materials of Milton were twice as sensuous as the materials of Donne' comes into clearer focus when considered along with Sprat's approach to language. 'Sensuous' must now mean the making of a plain statement about a thing—in short, describing it. Language must have its basis in *scene*, it must be *descriptive*, it must be placed on a basis of correspondence with material, not with idea, feeling, or any vision of speculative relationship—these were insecure and untrustworthy, and not to be risked in those unstable times. So however vast or vague Milton may want to paint his picture, he must be *materially* vast and vague, and provide us with the cosmic scenery, the stage setting, which is so familiar to anyone acquainted with baroque painting. This is what Miss Miles calls 'sensuous'—it is the provision of nouns and adjectives rather than verbs—it is the sensuousness of static material description, or listing of 'qualities'. A more comprehensive and responsible use of 'sensuous' would see the supremely sensuous nature of the verb—the motion word, which cannot be relegated to the circumscribed function of indicating merely relationship, or connecting elements into concept. Furthermore, she would not confine the function of the verb—that of motion-meaning—to the grammatical part of speech, but would see it operative in the poems through the movement of the sounds, accents, rhythms, etc. of the words themselves, whatever their part of speech. Thus, in Donne's line:

A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,

she would see the creative movement of the line in the progress of the sequence of vowel sounds—a sequence pointed by the four consonantal 'b's' which signal each vowel in its turn. We move from the open 'a' of 'bracelet' suddenly up to the flashing 'i' of 'bright', then wind around the 'o-u' of 'about' to encircle the contrasting low 'o' of 'bone'—a process of movement in physical sound formation exactly imitative of the paraphrasable meaning of the line were we to render it prosaically. This, then, is the unseen presence of the verb, though none exists as a part of speech in this line, composed as it is wholly of nouns, adjectives, and connectives. The important noun, *'hair'*, is made to stand out as such physically, enacting the meaning, by the very way in which the unharmonious and alien rasp of its sound stands out from the ripple of the 'b's' which comprises the body of the line. Substitute another noun of the same meaning, say, 'braid', and the effect is lost. Such an approach to the function of words in poetry would, I feel, be more valid than that of grammatical statistics, words taken out of context, since this whole effect would be destroyed were the words isolated and put in word-lists. However, the above process only goes to reinforce what Miss Miles asserted to be the primarily verbish character of Donne, while the same test on Milton generally bears out her observation that Milton is predominantly nounal and adjectival in the sense of described scenery rather than re-enacted experience. Taking her own limited definition of 'sensuous' in the spirit she means it,

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we reflect that what she notes in Milton is 'the vocabulary of sense—the use of sensible objects and qualities as poetic material'. And these 'objects' are not unrelated to the 'so many things' which Sprat thought should be pushed to the forefront of language. It gave Milton's work its scenic character, which proved so congenial to a later generation of Romantics. However, in its congeniality to Sprat's attitude, we might sense a poetic weakness, for Sprat's formula is, and was meant to be, one for prose. 'Dryden', says Van Doren, 'was most at home when making statements'[40] and on this ground we can group Milton and Dryden; the contrast between Milton's sounding roll and Dryden's polished couplets is one of manner which does not obliterate this fundamental affinity.

The important thing to notice about Sprat's approach to language is the separation which he makes between plain statement and any other meaning-structure. Metaphors were compared with clothing by Traherne, and those elements which cannot be said to constitute a clear prose statement of the subject matter are termed by Sprat 'amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style'. In another place he calls them 'the ornaments of speaking', and justifies his elimination of them from the reformed language as follows:

> 'They were at first, no doubt, an admirable instrument in the hands of wise men; when they were only employed to describe goodness, honesty, obedience in larger, fairer, and more moving images, to represent truth clothed with bodies and to bring knowledge back again to our very senses, from whence it was at first derived to our understandings. But now they make the fancy disgust the best things, if they come sound and unadorned; they are in open defiance against reason, professing, not to hold much correspondence with that, but with its slaves, the passions; *they give the mind a motion too changeable and bewitching to consist with right practice*'.[41]

Here again we are given the 'truth' as abstract idea—'goodness', 'honesty', and, significantly 'obedience', and then it is conceived as being decked out in substantial raiment only to make it palatable,[42] *clothed* with bodies, which presumably are then separable from it, and can more clearly and safely apprehend in this naked state, sound and unadorned, even though in their clothing they might appear 'larger, fairer, and more moving'. The principal thing, the real subject, is the abstract rational generality, which is not any more regarded as integral, part and parcel, of the physical world, the

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[40]Van Doren, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

[41]Sprat, *op. cit.*, Second Part, Section XX. My italics.

[42]In such manner that, in Dryden's phrase, 'you are pleased with the image without being cozened by the fiction'.
The Author's Apology for Heroic Poetry and Poetic Licence (1677), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 185.

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actuality of the scene with all its sensory attributes, but quite separable from this world, whose terms can be rated as little more than adornment. Furthermore, the two worlds, of the rational generality and the sensory physical 'bodies', are put into separate and fundamentally antagonistic compartments, the former as 'reason', and the latter as 'its slaves, the passions'. Throughout the period we find this philosophical scheme maintained, and the 'slaves, the passions', continually threatening to stage a rebellion, and overthrow the rightful rule and control of 'reason'. In the precarious time just after the Civil War when this was written, the sensory element, the side connected with the physical reality of man, was considered as safer if expunged.[43] It had shown itself as not knit with the reasonable structure of order, with the eternal stable arrangement of the world, but had rebelled into chaos, and was not to be trusted. The order existed still as a separable quality (man's action had forced its separation) and had to be preserved artificially, or to be found in the extra-human stability and security of changeless Nature. The real physical world of man was no longer consonant with this quality of Nature, but instead its 'passions', the lure of the senses, 'give the mind a motion too changeable . . . to consist with right practice'. Such motion, such change, must be opposed, and removed from the world of man, so naked eternal abstracts, such as 'obedience', had to appear without benefit of those physical properties which had so recently demonstrated their lack of affinity with such qualities. So the sensory 'moving images' of the proper language, the side of it which dealt in physical feeling, meaning, or effect, was systematically rooted out and destroyed. It was unnecessary and dangerous—not naked truth, but ornament and eloquence. And Sprat concludes that:

> '. . . eloquence ought to be banished out of all civil societies, as a thing fatal to peace and good manners'.[44]

It seems difficult to evade the pressing social fiat behind the 'great reformation in the manner of our speaking and writing' urged by Sprat, a prescription which came down to the rules for setting out information in the medium of good clear sober prose. The information was to be the principles of 'right reason', called 'the knowledge of Nature', and this was to be done without 'the colours of rhetoric, the devices of fancy, or the delightful deceit of fables'. Whereas it touched on the world of man, it was to state the principles which should guide him, but have nothing to do with the physical senses, passions, or desires which lead him astray—man was definitely *fallen*, and not to be trusted; he must be thus artificially controlled—his mind kept from anything which would lead it into 'a motion too

[43]It is interesting that one of the few ardent *defences* of metaphor in this period should be in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is found in the prefatory 'Author's Apology for his Book'.
[44]*Ibid.*

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changeable'. (One cannot but recall again that it was upon his case for the pure ungoverned sensationalism of man's nature that Hobbes based his need for the artificial order of the Leviathan. If one thinks that he overdid that case, one must remember the closeness of the Great Rebellion to the time of his writing). We have the language reform taking a purely ethical and didactic line in the widespread attack on the language of the clergy in their pulpit oratory. Dryden writes that the clergy 'are commonly the first corrupters of eloquence', and Eachard's amusing proposition for reforming them would forbid their using 'similitudes', 'unless there be an exact agreement with that which is compared'.[45] Sprat gives us the philosophical background for an age of prose, the medium which appears with such vigour and suddenness, and rises to such swift maturity, in Dryden's time. But we cannot fail to remark that Sprat's approach eliminates all of the very stuff of poetry, and makes impossible the type of response which poetry demands. It is thoroughly consonant with this that Dryden's alternative to putting his 'thoughts' into prose was 'to run them into verse', and that he always had difficulty in deciding which to do.

Coming to the connection between the 'classical' revival and the reformation of the English language, much of the relationship has already been covered, since the revival was in part a literary movement. Waller's admonition that poets 'must carve in Latin or in Greek' for permanence takes the form of a large scale effort to create an English counterpart of the Latin *prosodia*,[46] an overriding cultivation of the art of verse for its own sake. Much of this technique in the English was derived directly from devices of the Latin and Greek, to create, in a phrase of Dryden's, 'a kind of cadence, and as we call it, a run of verse, as like the original as the English can come up to the Latin'. He lavishes meticulous care on the use of the *synaloepha*, and criticizes work which is not perfect in its employment. The effect desired was harmonious sound—there was no suggestion that this sound should have anything to do with the subject matter, but it was to exist and be admired on its own, a surface of harmonious manner. Dryden writes:

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[45]Dryden frequently connects avoidance of figurative language with the atmosphere of criticism and disputation, *e.g.*:

> 'I am almost fearful of illustrating anything by similitude, lest he should confute it for an argument'.

Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 129.

[46]I have long had by me the materials of an English *Prosodia*, containing all the mechanical rules of versification, wherein I have treated, with some exactness, of the feet, the quantities, and the pauses. The French and Italians know nothing of the two first; at least their best poets have not practised them, etc.
Dryden, *Dedication of the Æneis* (1697), ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 217.

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'. . . if Seneca could make an ordinary thing sound well in Latin by the choice of words, the same, with the like care, might be performed in English'.[47]

Care was all that was required, in this craftsman's approach to poetry. Of the Latin effects of Ovid, Dryden remarks:

'I cannot say (they) are inimitable, because I have copied them and so may others, if they use the same diligence'.[48]

The new style for language, like that in so many other areas, was based on the hope that it 'might be reduced to a more harmonious sound'.[49] This sound, arrived at mechanically by tinkering with accents and syllables and elisions—in short, by technical attention to the medium *in vacuo*, could then be used as a suitable dressing for the thoughts. Dryden writes:

'Our language is noble, full, and significant; and I know not why he who is master of it, may not clothe ordinary things in it as decently as in the Latin, if he use the same diligence in his choice of words'.[50]

We note again the implicit separation of word and thing, matter and manner, and the emphasis being placed on the 'decency' of the manner. It is once more the concept of language as clothing, and its basis on Latin or Greek is thought of as a means of increasing the elegance of this clothing. We can find the phrase in Dryden:

'. . . as far as the English will come up to the elegance of the original'.[51]

and the effort was to improve it in that respect. Dryden's most responsible setting-out of his 'neo-classical' approach to language still leaves this deadly gap between the words and the subject, which so effectively cuts off the words from what should be their source of life:

'Now, the words are the colouring of the work, which, in the order of nature, is last to be considered. The design, the disposition, the manners and the thoughts are all before it; where any of those are wanting or imperfect, so much wants or is imperfect in the imitation of human life, which is the very definition

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[47]Dryden, *Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 118.

[48]Dryden, *Examen Poeticum*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 10.

[49]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[50]Dryden, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 104.

[51]Dryden, *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 92.

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> of a poem. Words, indeed, like glaring colours, are the first beauties that arise and strike the sight; but, if the draught be false or lame, the figures ill-disposed, the manners obscure or inconsistent, or the thoughts unnatural, then the finest colours are but daubing, and the piece is a beautiful monster at the best'.[52]

The figure with which we are presented is that of a coloured content —a content which is so separable from the words that these can be removed. Their beauty is thought of as deriving from themselves alone, as medium, and not coming to them out of the subject matter itself—which last, we note, is summoned up in the terms of manners, thoughts, and the disposition of figures. Dryden writes elsewhere:

> '. . . the forming it into acts and scenes, disposing of actions and passions into their proper places, and beautifying both with descriptions, similitudes, and propriety of language, is the principal employment of the poet'.[53]

This is purely the 'technician's' approach to literary creation. Dryden wishes to use language as a tailor uses cloth, and he finds in the Latin and Greek poets styles of cutting and sewing which he feels will suit the elegance and refinement of the urban polite society. Horace, says Waller, will 'Give us new rules, and set our harp in tune'.[54] Even the actual works of some of these ancient authors, done into properly well-mannered translations became the legal tender of fashion, and this was the avowed standard for their revival. Of Horace, who seemed to have suited the Restoration best of all the ancients, Dryden writes:

> 'His urbanity—that is, his good manners, are to be commended . . .'.[55]

and we are told that

> '. . . besides many of the learned, Ovid has almost all the *Beaux*, and the whole fair sex, his declared patrons'.[56]

This brings us to the third theme to be related to the changed conception of the character of the English language and its proper business which accompanied the Restoration period. This is the picture of London as an urban metropolis, housing in ill-concealed

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[52]Dryden, *Preface to the Fables*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 252. See also *A Parallel of Poetry and Painting*, Vol. II, p. 147-149.
[53]Dryden, *Preface to An Evening's Love* (1671), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 146.
[54]Waller, *Upon the Earl of Roscommon's Translation of Horace.*
[55]Dryden, *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 84.
[56]Dryden, *Preface to the Fables*, ed. Ker, Vol. II, p. 248.

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antagonism a 'modish', dilettante, and somewhat superfluous Courtly smart set who still could lay claim to being top of the social ladder, and a constantly growing City of merchants and professional men whose money made them powerful, related to the Puritan movement, exacting a standard of common-sense sobriety in public behaviour, and interested in such literature as would clearly inform and guide them in the practical world of affairs. As representative literary figure—the figure who belongs to the whole rather than to one of the special parts of this picture—we have the commercial man of letters, the professional poet and journalist such as Dryden, playing the compromise game of success on all sides. Much of the impact of this social pattern on the literary language I have discussed, but a few more points should be mentioned. The interests of the bourgeoisie of the City were more material than aesthetic, and they wanted information, political opinion, or practical personal guidance. Their reading habits had been formed on the religious and political pamphlets of the Interregnum. Obviously the medium which was most suited to their needs was prose, or verse which had the character of prose. So this side of the urban picture—and it was the side in ascendency—joins hands with the trend to natural philosophy exemplified by Sprat to create a prose rather than a poetic psychology for the literary productions of the period.

Another salient feature of the divided social scene also led linguistic expression in a direction not congenial to the means of profound poetry. Not all of the talk of the Restoration period was polite conversation; with the division between King and Parliament, the former with the titular authority, the latter with the money, the common arena for the conflict was the Parliamentary debate. Here what was depended on to carry the case was a sonorous cadence, a lofty turn of declamation; the great men here were those who could speak well. One hoped to sway the floor, not with what was said, but by how elegantly he could deliver his statements—elocution and the grand manner were materially consequential to the success of the cause, though one's message was the material of prose. Here again, technique is the answer—a manner which could be laid on from the outside to any subject matter, and consisted of a pattern of sound, cadence, etc. which would dress up any thought in attractive finery.[57] In this form appeared the major interests of the period, and since the poets, embroiled in the scene as they and their readers were, wanted also to deal with these subjects, they also to a large extent took over the manner. Here again Milton and Dryden are assembled on common ground. Professor Grierson writes:

> 'What *Absalom* and *Achitophel* reminds one of, quite as much as of *Paradise Lost*, is a political, platform speech, not of

[57] '. . ., elocution, or the art of clothing and adorning that thought, . . .'.
Dryden, *Preface to Annus Mirabilis* (1667), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 15.

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> Burke, who in his greater passages is more Miltonic than Dryden, but, say, of Lord Beaconsfield'.[58]

But what else does a great part of *Paradise Lost* remind us of? The lengthy argumentative conclave of the devils in Hell is simply a model Parliamentary debate, speech after speech. Dryden actually observes this in the terms of his operatic adaptation, where he pokes cutely at the Dutch by saying that the rebel angels 'fell, from Heav'n to rise States General of Hell'.[59] Along with the descriptive Milton, already discussed, we must also put this speech-making Milton, where even Miss Miles's 'sensuous' cannot be applied. Here the matter is abstract general statement, delivered up in a continual sonorous roll; in these long passages we feel, and the monotonous noise and insensitivity of the language shows, the complete absence of immediate perception, of sensory response to a living subject. These sections of Milton's work, constituting much too great a proportion, are the parts once described by Eliot as 'large but insufficiently furnished apartments filled with heavy conversation'.[60] Nor should we forget, in connection with Dryden and his followers, that the Coffee-Houses were like small-scale Parliaments, where as Beljame said, 'people read newspapers and pamphlets aloud, or where impromptu orators held forth for or against Whigs or Tories'. Dryden had not only the influential example of controversial oratory, but the actual opportunity to practise it himself from his armchair at Will's, so a properly sonorous or clever cadence, rolled off in a grand manner, could be immediately rewarded by a round of applause. We can see that once more the trend has been away from an effort to realize through poetry the central meanings of life, to a delivering-up of prosaic opinion dressed in the 'harmony' of independently planned sound and cadence.

Of the impact on literary language of the other aspects of this busy shifting urban scene, with its standards of success and appearances, manner and manners, I have indicated enough in the description itself. Poetry was an external manner—a fancy dress for a 'thought' whose nature was that of a prose statement. The control for this manner did not come from the inside, evolving out of the subject, but was dictated from the outside by sociological considerations, by the current fashions of propriety, manners, and socially approved behaviour. Dryden states the case nicely in the *Preface* to his rewrite of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> ' 'Tis true, some actions, though natural, are not fit to be represented; and broad obscenities in words ought in good manners to be avoided: expressions therefore are a modest cloathing of

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[58]Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

[59]Dryden, *The State of Innocence and the Fall of Man* (1677), Act I, Scene 1, London, for T. Johnson, 1721, p. 22.

[60]T. S. Eliot, *William Blake* (1920) in *Selected Essays*, London, Faber and Faber, 1934, p. 321.

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> our thoughts, as Breeches and Petticoats are of our Bodies. If I have kept myself within the bounds of modesty . . . etc.'.[61]

If the proponents of 'natural philosophy' wanted their expression 'naked', as prose statement which did not conceal itself in the 'swellings of style' and 'the ornaments of speaking', and needed not the adornment of being clothed with bodies, crowns or precious stones, Dryden will have his 'thoughts' urbanely attired in the modest clothing of his 'expressions', though this dressing of language is presumably as removable as the coat from one's shoulders, and the thought will still stand as the essential subject matter. We see all the trends of the period combining behind this safe separation of abstract from concrete, thought from 'sensory' experience or sensation, 'thoughts' from 'words', manner from matter, 'reason' from 'its slaves the passions'. And even behind this, we can see the seismic development charted earlier: the separation of the abstract form—order, position, stability, obedience, concord, harmony, etc.—from the living concrete expression of society itself; the dissolution of 'the social organism'.

HAROLD WENDELL SMITH.

[Two other essays dealing with the language of poetry in the Restoration period have appeared in numbers 2 and 3 of this volume of *Scrutiny*.—*Ed.*]

[61]Dryden, *Preface to All For Love* (1678), ed. Ker, Vol. I, p. 193.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

THE LATEST AUDEN

NONES by W. H. Auden (*Faber and Faber*, 10/6).

'Mr. Auden's readers', the dust-jacket informs us, 'know him as an intellectual poet whose technical resourcefulness is always equal to the ceaseless development of his mind and sensibility; a poet who never arrests his progress or repeats himself . . .'. That might seem to be a challenge to those people who have from time to time had occasion to declare their disappointment at the stasis, the failure in fulfilment, of a poet who, amidst an arid literary scene, appeared in his early work to have the virtues of intelligence and vigour and a real, if at times irresponsible, feeling for language. A failure of growth, an absence of anticipated soundness and maturity, have for a number of readers seemed to mark the volumes published since the early *Paid on Both Sides*; yet many must have hoped that Mr. Auden might suddenly, somehow, find himself again, might after all justify their early interest and expectation. It is well to say directly that *Nones* does not give evidence of a turn for the good. Indeed, it gives the impression of being in the nature of a full-stop; or rather, perhaps, a path from which it seems improbable that Mr. Auden will ever wish really to stray.

Perhaps the best way to lend support to this view is to take the hint of the blurb. If Mr. Auden's 'technical resourcefulness' is the correlative of his 'mind and sensibility', to what conclusions will an examination of his 'technique' lead us? One may begin by looking at the opening lines of the first poem, 'Prime' :

> Simultaneously, as soundlessly,
> Spontaneously, suddenly
> As, at the vaunt of the dawn, the kind
> Gates of the body fly open
> To its world beyond,

Here, I think it will be agreed, there is a sense of strain, a sense that the poet is trying artificially to inject life into verse that resolutely refuses to leave the ground. For what can the first two lines be said to have achieved? Do the four adverbs, words with a rich potential of associations, signify as much in the context as the attention drawn to them by the alliteration would suggest? Does it not seem as though the choice of those particular words has been dictated less by a concern for precision and rightness than by a preoccupation with alliteration and internal rhyme? To me, at any rate, they seem little more than gestures towards a desired illusion

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of portentousness. A further source of the lack of conviction one feels behind the lines is a certain rhythmic awkwardness and inexpressiveness—not, it must be said, anything like so prevalent in this poem as it is in 'The Managers', or 'Pleasure Island':

> To send a cry of protest or a call for
> Protection up into all
> Those dazzling miles, to add, however sincerely,
> One's occasional tear
> To that small volume, would be rather silly,

Those few lines were picked at random from a poem running to some eighty. The monotony of reading verse of that kind, it will readily be appreciated, the effort involved in dragging the apprehension from one line to the next, is such as to make it necessary positively to drive oneself through to the end. The words seem to be strewn haphazardly, tortuously, over a rigid framework which sternly forbids any subtlety of intonation or suppleness of movement. Not that the arrangement of words *has* been haphazard. The first and second lines of the extract end where they do in order that the words 'Protection' and 'all' may receive some sort of stress. I say 'some sort of stress' because the effect obtained is purely ocular. A quite unwarrantable effort of 'interpretation' is required if it is to be brought out in a live reading. Mr. Auden ought to know by this time—indeed, I am sure he does know—that one does not obtain effects of speech-stress and rhythm merely by chopping the lines.

Mr. Auden, we have already recalled, was distinguished in his early poetry by a feeling for language; that is to say, his language had a pliability, at times a cumulative suggestiveness, that went appropriately with very real, if limited interests. But even then there was a tendency, more insistent as volume succeeded volume, to indulge in verbal virtuosity for its own sake. The results were often striking and amusing, but hardly what one expected from a responsible man growing older in an age growing simultaneously more and more barren and disheartening. His taste for verbal ingenuities persists in *Nones,* though it has become a very feeble sort of juggling:

> Sometimes we see astonishing clearly
> The out-there when we are already in;
> Now that is not what we are here-for really.

Or there is the bad, unfunctional use of pun, as in 'Prim':

> Holy this moment, wholly in the right,

Mr. Auden has always been fond of coinages and slangisms, a schoolboy habit that one had hoped he would grow out of. *Nones* shows us that he is not tired of them yet. Whereas in the earlier work, however, one tended to regard them as excrescences on more solid

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substance, they figure here rather as substitutes for genuine verbal vitality. Essentially they are a means of escape from the responsibility of integrating language and experience; of deciding, in other words, exactly what, if anything, the experience amounts to. I do not think that any very convincing case could be made out to justify the following lines, even though the poet might claim the sanction of Browning. The reader who is interested in poetry is likely to feel that his intelligence is being insulted:

> the orchestral
> Metaphor bamboozles the most oppressed
> —As a trombone the clerk will bravely
> Go oompah-oompah to his minor grave—

Such devices, far from being a sign of fertile verbal invention, manifest an essential tiredness, an inability clearly to focus the poetic object. They are protestations of a vitality that does not exist.

'Tiredness' would also seem to be a descriptive word for the staple of Mr. Auden's imagery. Much of it has a faded, second-hand air, a suggestion of having been drawn from some property-cupboard of modern poetical cliché:

> As disregarded as some
> Discarded artifact of our own,
> Like torn gloves, rusted kettles,
> Abandoned branchlines, worn lop-sided
> Grindstones buried in nettles.

(The passage is an extremely felicitous commentary on itself.) With that kind of thing, as might be expected, there goes a persistent habit of reminiscence. Yeats is a fairly constant presence:

> Speak well of moonlight on a winding stair,
> Of light-boned children under great green oaks;
> The wonder, yes, but death should not be there.

So, in various guises, is Mr. Eliot, from echoes of 'Triumphal March' in 'Ischia' to reminiscences of *Four Quartets* in 'The Chimeras'. But the most surprising presence of all is that of Mr. Walter De la Mare, whom Mr. Auden's would-be ironic surface cannot hide:

> Their learned kings bent down to chat with frogs:
> This was before the Battle of the Bogs.
> *The key that opens is the key that rusts.*

Such 'influences' are not in the nature of the fertile suggestion that leads to fresh poetic creation quite distinct from the original, but rather testify to a want of personal idiom, which in itself is but a local sign of lack of urgency, lack of conviction, lack of real interest.

An air of boredom and lassitude, indeed, broods over the whole volume. Not infrequently Mr. Auden seems to be trying to atone for this by indulging in slightly *risqués* side-glances:

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The boiling springs
Which betray her secret fever
Make limber the gout-stiffened joint

And improve the venereal act:

That might be likened to a faintly salacious smile. At other times it becomes a more decidedly unpleasant snigger, like this 'spicing' of the tedious straggle of 'Pleasure Island':[1]

As bosom, backside, crotch
Or other sacred trophy is borne in triumph
Past his adoring by
Souls he does not try to like;

Disgust, of course, is the impression intended by the poet, but the pleasure taken in enumerating its objects is unmistakable. In any case, that kind of disgust, if genuine disgust it be, can hardly be called healthy or mature. It is little more than the disgust of the sensitive adolescent schoolboy, outraged by his gross contemporaries.

An unresolved ambiguity of attitude, manifesting itself locally in a corresponding uncertainty of tone, has for long been a characteristic of Mr. Auden's work. One remembers the satiric gestures at the expense of the Public School ethos, which oddly enough seemed at the same time to be an endorsement of the very prejudices they were apparently intended to undermine. The same kind of ambiguity characterizes such poems as 'The Managers' or 'A Household'. It is hard to say exactly how we are supposed to take the business-man of the latter poem, who, in order 'to disarm suspicious minds at lunch', or to mollify those with whom he has just driven a bargain, paints a false and glowing picture of his home. Never, '(A reticence for which they all admire him)', does he speak of his early-deceased wife,

But proudly tells of that young scamp his heir,
Of black eyes given and received, thrashings
Endured without a sound to save a chum;

That, in whatever spirit it was offered, could not but be embarrassing.

It should by now be apparent that *Nones* represents no new departure, no fresh mustering of forces. It is significant that the less tiresome poems in the volume, (though they cannot for all that be called good), are mildly amusing squibs in the familiar manner of the earlier Auden, like 'The Love Feast', or 'The Fall of Rome', dedicated to Mr. Cyril Connolly:

[1]It is apposite to remark here that 'Pleasure Island', in common with other poems in the volume, oddly suggests inspiration from Hollywood. Much of 'Not in Baedeker' could be the commentary of a 'serious' travel film.

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Fantastic grow the evening gowns;
Agents of the fisc pursue
Absconding tax-defaulters through
The sewers of provincial towns.

And yet he confesses himself, in 'A Walk after Dark', to be

already at the stage
When one starts to dislike the young

The volume shows early irritating mannerisms persisting without even the irresponsible vitality that once went with them. Maturity of years has brought no maturity of outlook, no deepening and broadening of the interests, but merely weariness and boredom. For that is the abiding impression of these poems. Not one of the poems gives evidence of any urgency, any real pressure or personal engagement. The defence could no doubt argue that the volume is a testimony to the variety of Mr. Auden's interests. He certainly writes on a number of subjects, if that is the criterion, but his attitude to all of them is external and superficial. The dust-jacket tells us that *Nones* has 'an underlying unity that makes it more than a collection of scattered verse': yet one looks in vain for any dominant impulse controlling the heterogeneous mass. For what has Mr. Auden positively to offer? There is, to be sure, a kind of fashionable metaphysical aura:

Somewhere are places where we have really been,
dear spaces,
Of our deeds and faces, scenes we remember
As unchanging because there we changed,

Then 'Memorial for the City', with an epigraph from Juliana of Norwich, reminds us that Mr. Auden is a Christian. But this lengthy poem has no more vitality than the rest; it does not persuade one that the poet's religious preoccupations have prompted him to live creation any more than his other sources.

Nones, then, is far from being an encouraging volume. Mr. Auden has for some time now been academically respectable, and the present volume bears unmistakably the marks of academic enshrinement. It has the right kind of stolidity, and a fundamental inoffensiveness to the comfortably prejudiced but *soi-disant* 'open' mind. That being so, there is little prospect that Mr. Auden will in the future choose to alter his course. *Nones* has the variety of deadness that passes very well for 'ripeness' and 'serenity'. But to have pronounced all these strictures on a poet who once evinced such distinct ability, is no laughing matter, no occasion for complacent self-congratulation. To anyone really concerned about the health of contemporary literature, such a spectacle of dissolution must be profoundly depressing, even tragic.

R. MAYHEAD.

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SHAKESPEARE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

SHAKESPEARE AND ELIZABETHAN POETRY by M. C. Bradbrook (Chatto and Windus, 15/-).

Miss Bradbrook's *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* points up the double difficulty in discussing Shakespeare's work to-day—the difficulty of keeping relevant control over the non-Shakespearean material (so often necessary to an examination of particular points of his dramatic and poetic art), while ensuring that this material leads on to further elucidation and evaluation of the plays. In spite of illuminating remarks and suggestions from Mr. Eliot and the abundance of studies of various phases of Shakespeare's work, we still need a closely examined definition of what Shakespeare criticism can best do to-day by a closer integration of expanding scholarship with distinctly literary criteria. The genuinely interested reader (who looks for something to guide, to 'inform', to focus interest on the plays as poetic drama) will be readily in sympathy with her desire to go outside the 'growth and growing specialization of modern research', which is too facile an invitation to the uncritical student to accumulate a mass of irrelevant information. However divergent the reader's conclusions may be from hers, he will welcome the enthusiastic and close attention she has given to the general body of poetry written between 1580 and 1600, and will find in the acknowledgments, comments and documentation of her Notes (pp. 240-272) a *vade mecum* of most of the important approaches to Shakespeare to-day. Her wide and careful reading is all the more valuable because it does not distract her from attention to the poetry itself.

From the modest tone of the Preface, Miss Bradbrook seems to welcome beforehand the qualifications and strictures which her method of presentation so often invites. The main difficulty for the reviewer and the non-specialist reader whom she has in mind is to discover just what she wishes to emerge from the abundant similarities and disparities she notices in so many poets. There is an undesirable kaleidoscopic effect, particularly in Chapters I-IV, in which a great variety of quotations and references is flashed before the reader in quick succession and in rather hazy focus. From the wealth of passages drawn on there emerges very little in the form of judgments on the quality of the poetry. It is always ungracious to expect a writer to have written another book; but one feels that another method than the chronological examination of Shakespeare's early work would have served better to 'pull the question together for reconsideration', (p. viii) especially since she does not formulate the 'question' itself. A single theme, such as Shakespeare's ability to make the best of two worlds, the court and the popular theatre,

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would not have been a specialist study (in the derogatory sense), and would have both thrown the details into clearer perspective and sent the reader back to the plays with increased insight.

There is thus a disproportion between her modest aim, (her 'kite-balloon') and her sub-title, *A Study of his Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time*. This 'relation' is defined neither in extent nor in kind, and becomes a general invitation to indicate *any* kind of resemblance or diversity—in attitude, interest, language or device—that has occurred to her in her wide reading. The big question for specialist and non-specialist alike is not whence did Shakespeare derive hints or materials, but what did he do with them, what did they become in the hands of his expanding genius? Beyond discussion in rather conventional terms of characters and plot, she offers very little to indicate wherein Shakespeare's superiority lies. She is most circumspect in indicating her own sources, but she appears to owe more than she suspects to the director-producer approach of Granville-Barker—an approach which necessarily implies a careful follow-up of attention to inflection, speed, emphasis, etc., in actual rehearsal, and which should be supplemented in literary criticism by a corresponding detailed attention to the poetry as poetry.

There are many places in the book where the 'relation' of Shakespeare to his contemporaries begins to come into close focus and to demand careful examination, but from these the writer slips away with some quite non-committal remark like 'Percy seems almost a first study of Coriolanus' (p. 204), or 'such a scene [from *Cynthia's Revels*] recalls rather the foppery of Osric than the wit-combats of Navarre, and his court' (p. 219), or '*Lucrece* is comparable with Daniel's *Rosamond's Complaint*' (p. 104). She says (p. 132) that 'Shakespeare is of course far more skilful than Kyd; his writing is tighter and more elaborated, his dramatic climaxes more powerful, and the integration of speech and action is beyond the earlier writer'. But it is by defining 'tighter', 'skilful', 'integration', in terms of the verse itself, that the most effective supplement can be made to the merely scholarly approach. She adds that the 'colouring of the play [*Richard II*] came through Kyd from the mediæval Complaints and from the *Mirror for Magistrates*'—without examining what these sources became in Shakespeare's hands. Similarly she denotes the sonnets as the place in which 'Shakespeare developed his sensibility' (p. 146), and says that the images used by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth 'emanate from a single mind writing in a single mood' (p. 88) with no suggestion of the complexities underlying such terms as 'sensibility', 'image', 'single mood'; she consequently conveys little guidance towards estimating the fineness of the artistic mind at work in the passages she uses. Unless the non-specialist she has in mind possesses an unusual critical acumen, such general remarks are not likely to carry him from the book to the plays except by warming him at the fire of her enthusiasm.

Unintentionally, she lays a number of traps for the unwary, as in presenting structure (p. 136) as an arrangement of characters

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and scenes without warning that a similar arrangement of characters and scenes (in her abstract sense) might occur in a quite incompetent poet; she speaks of the '*simple* trick of contrasted plot and subplot' (p. 154); she suggests, merely as an example of the ability to distinguish between life and art, that 'Hamlet is surprised that the First Player should work himself up to real tears in the scene of Priam's death' (p. 91). By saying 'the gain was almost incalculable when Shakespeare turned from the courtly world of the sonnets . . . and subdued himself to what he worked in' (p. 91), she obscures a point of capital importance in studying Shakespeare's growth—that as he went along, he transformed what he had previously learnt and did not merely turn away from it. Similarly, Shakespeare's contribution to dramatic criticism in the Prologue to *Henry V* is misleadingly described as 'sophisticated' (p. 93). And the less experienced reader is likely to miss the profound and many-sided practical insight into politics which the Histories suppose and present if told that 'Shakespeare avoided both judgment and dogma and kept to the "high road of life" ' (p. 92). The relation between Cordelia and her sisters is blurred by calling it a 'simple and complete opposition' (p. 95). The Shakespearean use of dramatic pattern is misconstrued in a limiting fashion by saying that '*Richard III* is Shakespeare's most patterned play' (p. 129).

There are three larger issues on which her selection of evidence is likely to mislead. First, by stopping short at *Twelfth Night*, she produces an impression that the work prior to 1600 is a completed achievement from which Shakespeare simply 'turned' to other tasks —the sense of continuity and growth between 1590 and 1608 is obscured. Her almost complete neglect of the later plays is the more to be regretted since so many of her points could be made more pointed by showing in more detail the direction in which we now know Shakespeare was developing even before 1600—detail for which room could be found by omitting some of the less important work of the 80's and 90's. Secondly, in presenting examples of the 'relation' of Shakespeare to others, she conveys little sense of the abundant and varied vitality of the age out of which the poetry grew. The very scanty references to the life of the nation and the strong emphasis on the court and on literary 'species' (*e.g.*, Ovidian romance, revenge tragedy and satiric comedy) tend to produce a general impression of an Elizabethan Bloomsbury, of a clique of writers living apart from the ordinary concerns of their time, and drawing their themes, interests and significant approval from each other. This impression is deepened by Miss Bradbrook's idealized treatment of Sidney; as a man or a poet, Sidney can hardly have impressed Shakespeare or even Spenser, who possessed considerable critical ability and who knew rather penetratingly the realities of the court circle to which they catered. She does indeed offer interesting evidence on the ways in which the Elizabethan audience would have understood the plays, and she has some illuminating suggestions on how the character of Prince Hal should be read; but most of what she says on Elizabethan opinions takes us only a very short distance

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towards deciding what our own opinions to-day should be. Thirdly, while the Italian Renaissance is often mentioned, she does not grapple with the question: How much did the Italian influence amount to? Was Shakespeare a more civilized, a more complete poet or dramatist for having come in contact with the Italians? In what sense was there a Renaissance in Italy? (Dawson, Gilson and Marrou—the last lecturing in Oxford only last year on 'Humanisme et Patristique'—have fairly well shown that 'Renaissance' is almost meaningless when applied to Italy unless we push it back to about the sixth century; this evidence she dismisses by saying, on page 9, that it 'was in Italy . . . that a new and secular doctrine of the world grew up, to nourish the great artists and poets of the Renaissance'.) Her dismissal of native mediæval influences as of little importance (pp. 14-15) seems to impose some obligation to explain why the continental influences had such enriching and stimulating effects. On the basis even of some of her own authorities (*e.g.*, Hardin Craig and William Farnham), the Tudor writers can hardly be described as 'building from the debris of mediæval tradition' (p. 15). No doubt the Morality tradition was dead by Shakespeare's time, but the folk life from which that tradition (and so much else) drew vitality was not dead or reduced to debris. The mediæval world was not a 'unity' (p. 1); even its metaphysical or 'world-picture' was never really unified, as the Scotist-Thomist (and other) controversies show. To present the Middle Ages as achieving a static 'integration of thought and life' while allowing an 'absolute cleavage between human values and eternal values' is to present the mediæval mind as a very fragile and even inhuman synthesis which, even to 'an age like ours', can not be 'particularly fascinating' (p. 3). Until we see how far the mediæval world was from integrating thought and life, we miss the sense and range of its 'fruitful tensions', and cannot accurately assess the kind of help it gave to writers from Marlowe to Bunyan. She follows conventional literary history too closely in speaking of Magnanimity (p. 151) as merely a Renaissance literary creation without noticing the deeply serious content, the relations to ordinary conduct, which the notion derived from mediæval theology. In the same way, Langland's 'anguish' is misrepresented as lying 'precisely in that he did not find the unity for which he sought' (p. 4); on Langland's suppositions, unity could not be found in the temporal sphere at all. The mediæval love of allegory (pp. 6-9) is discussed as a mere convention of scholars and artists without mention of its deep roots in mediæval convictions quite outside learning and art. Her Introduction (which has little perceptible relation to the rest of her book) makes it clear that critics starting from pre-Elizabethan points should have in mind a general map of the mediæval world and a precise definition of the part of that map from which they work.

The limitations Miss Bradbrook has imposed on herself reduce her in too many places (*e.g.*, pp. 147-9, 158, 229-31) to discussing the plays as they might be known through Lamb's *Tales*. This can hardly be what she has in mind in defending her book as an

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'old-fashioned Victorian attempt to give a comprehensive account of a great subject'.

The above points are offered not so much as disparaging criticism but as suggestions for defining more closely the 'question' of Shakespeare's relation to his contemporaries and predecessors, as outlines of a cautionary appendix to a book which she calls an 'interim report'. It is impossible to take a carping attitude towards a book which has so modest an aim, so transparently sincere an interest, and so varied a survey of twenty years of great poetry. She is always perspicuous, and, as in previous books, she takes every precaution to ensure that her impressions arise from a constantly renewed contact with the texts themselves. While her method is most suited to the Histories, her wide reading and collating of texts provide the reader with both an economic means of distinguishing many of the Elizabethan cross-currents, and a number of serviceable starting points for understanding what it was (besides superlative genius) that helped Shakespeare to work out the lines along which his talents could find their fullest expression.

L. A. CORMICAN.

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